



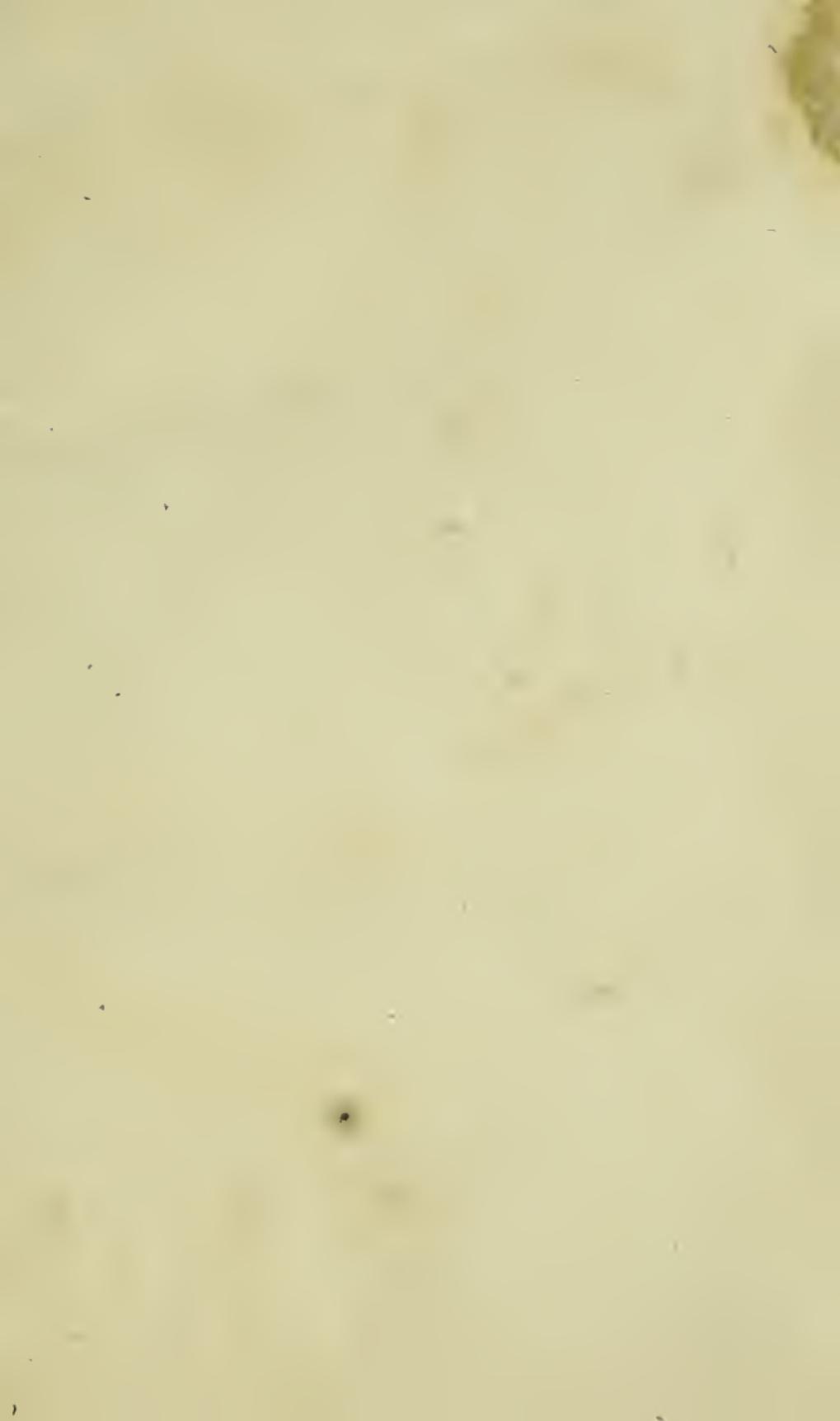
PERKINS LIBRARY

Duke University

Rare Books

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/epistlesorgreats00rell>









Elijah Lovings Book 1791



Elijah Loring.
—, —

Abby R. Long

E P I S T L E S :
OR,
THE GREAT SALVATION
CONTENDED;
IN
A SERIES OF LETTERS
TO
A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.

By J. R. Abby

Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace, good-will towards men, Luke ii. 14.
What shall we, then, say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Rom. viii. 31.
Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4.

L O N D O N :

Printed by M. LEWIS, for the AUTHOR.

M. DCC. LXXVI.



*3 and 4th
Stans*

E P I S T L E S:

O R,

THE GREAT SALVATION CONTENDED.

L E T T E R I.

DEAR BRETHREN,

IT Grieved me to hear that there were disputings among you, being aware of their evil tendency; but, when the fruit appeared in the loss of your christian simplicity, it made me unhappy indeed. Alas! how destructive to the pure and peaceable spirit of the gospel, is fleshly opinionative knowledge!

MORE than twelve months are elapsed, since I was first informed of your mutual heats, and trials of skill, respecting knowledge, argument and orthodoxy; during which, I have written sundry letters to you, without taking the least notice of your dissensions in opinion.

FROM knowledge of human nature I was aware, that my interfering in your disputes at that time would be adding fuel to fire, and would operate as an inflammative in a fever: hence I waited for a favorable crisis, for a happy period, when I might interpose with advantage; but this I could not expect, until both parties were reduced to reverence truth alone, though at the expence of the darling, and to the notorious mortification of the selfish principle.

I THANK God our Saviour, I have not waited in vain: I have now the pleasure to find you united again in that one grand and only interesting subject, Jesus Christ and him crucified:

and

and that you are mutually influenced to lay aside such peculiar tenets or dogmas, as have, for some time past, distinguished your parties; joining in christian sincerity, to worship God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no more confidence in the flesh. Under this influence may your souls abide, as they will prosper.

IN your last letter, unto which you all subscribed, you assure me, that you are perfectly satisfied with the great salvation, rejoicing in its freeness and fulness: intent alone on knowing and enjoying your personal interest and happiness therein, without the enquiry, Lord, what shall this man do? I cannot but applaud your spirit and conduct; may you persevere therein to the end.

IN reply to your desire (that I would give you my thoughts, according to the scriptures, on the subjects which so lately distracted you) I have no objection to communicate to you all that is

in my heart concerning these matters. But are you prepared to hear it? Are not your late divisions on these accounts rather too recent? May not the former spirit and temper, in some measure, recur, from my attempting a solution of what formerly gave birth to them? You tell me, that your satisfaction and rejoicing in Jesus Christ is such, that whether *all*, or only a *part* of the human race, shall be saved, is a point now of the uttermost indifference to you; and that the lights which the scriptures throw on these doctrines, will not again confound nor dazzle your christian eye.

BE it so. But in speaking of the fulness, freeness, and extent of the great salvation, let me premise, that the two former are more immediately necessary to be known and believed by us: for on the belief and experience of these depend our consolations; whereas, whether all mankind will be saved, or not, is, among christians, rather a question of curiosity than of necessity. Hence, I declare, that the rejoicing

which I have in Christ Jesus, neither depends *on*, nor connects *with*, either side of the question ; but hath its foundation, rise and support, in the report and testimony of the Spirit, speaking by the prophets and apostles, concerning Jesus Christ, and his free and full salvation. Therefore, should I be mistaken in my ideas, respecting the extent of the salvation of Christ, yet, this mistake cannot in the least affect my own interest or rejoicing in that salvation ; nor can I be distressed, or greatly *disappointed*, at the detection of error in such opinions, as I neither derived nor expected comfort from.

ON the face of the letter, there are, in the holy scriptures, three doctrines, which, to a literal view, are notoriously repugnant to each other ; and these occasion no small bustle and disputations among the religious part of mankind : for when men are influenced by either of these doctrines, they conclude themselves under obligation to militate against the others ; and this is one of the principal causes of alteration,

S L E T T E R I.

tion, and of dissensions so prevailing among christians.

FIRST, There is a conditional salvation, dependent on man's repentance, faith and obedience. Secondly, There is a free and unconditional salvation of mankind, not dependent on works of righteousness, as wrought by them ; but this, from God's absolute will and pleasure, is limited to a few only whom he has loved and made choice of for that purpose ; while the others, which are by far the greater part of mankind, are, by the same will and pleasure, rejected, and excluded from that salvation. Thirdly, A general or universal salvation, where all, who died in Adam, shall be made alive in Christ.

To such, who, in simplicity and christian candor, are conversant with the sacred book, I need go no further for proof, than barely to mention it ; that these doctrines, so apparently contradictory, so diametrically opposite, are, nevertheless, contained in that book ; and to this,
the

the different professions of christians bear witness : for, while in particular they explode and deny my assertion, yet, as they are Calvinists, Arminians, or Universalists, they confirm it : and, with a general voice affirm, what, as particular facts, they deny with abhorrence.

NOTWITHSTANDING which, there are but few individuals, so crucified to system, so detached from party, as to see and confess this truth ; much less can they perceive, how those doctrines, so seemingly contradictory, and opposite to each other, should yet be one in Christ, and preaching the same salvation, in the same language. Yet in this light I view them, and hope to speak intelligibly of the matter to you in my next ; recommending myself to your esteem, I conclude, with assuring you that I am, in sincerity,

Your affectionate Brother and Servant,

(for Christ's Sake)

J. R.

LETTER II.

DEAR BRETHREN,

CHRIST Jesus, our Lord, is, in the holy scriptures, eminently called the Truth. Every work and word of God, are only shadowy of him : Christ, as the one only truth, is the consistence and harmony of all the seeming contradictions contained in the scriptures : he hath believed and obeyed, and therefore inherits the promise :—While the people, as united to him, as gathering with him, are, with him, partakers of the same salvation :—All the promises of God being, in him, Yea and Amen, to them :—Jesus, as our fore-runner, is the elect, precious, the predestinated to eternal life ; and such are the *people* in him : He took
not

not on him angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham : This is their election. Christ also sustained the reprobate character, when made sin for us, and when encompassed with the sorrows of death, and the pains of hell. And as to universal salvation : He is also the truth of that. For, though we see not yet all the individuals of Adam's race, as such, brought up, through the knowledge of Christ, to the great salvation ; yet, in him, all flesh have seen the salvation of God : in him, all are taught of God : in him, all know God, from the greatest to the least. In him, the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea.

BUT, to explain this more according to reason and argument, I would observe ; that not only the term Salvation, but every other term relating to the thing itself, has divers significations in the scriptures : yet, with consistence of matter, and harmony of spirit. To instance—By salvation, we understand that

state and condition in which Jesus Christ, by the purity of his life, the intention of his death, and the power of his resurrection, hath placed mankind before the face of God. This state is called in the scriptures, an everlasting salvation ; the great salvation ; eternal salvation ; and is described as wrought in the Lord ; independent of knowledge, faith, or obedience, on the part of the saved, individually considered ; “God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” In this salvation, God beholds us without spot, or blemish, or any such thing : Our iniquities are pardoned, our warfare is accomplished ; so that the Lord beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. This is the salvation, in which God ever beholds his creatures, and which the gospel preaches to them as glad tidings, that faith might come by hearing.

AGAIN, Salvation, sometimes in the scriptures, is made to depend on our repentance, belief,

belief, and obedience. This I might explain in a twofold sense ; either as the voice of the law, in contradistinction to the free unconditional gospel-salvation, spoken of above ; or, as relating to the knowledge and joy of that free salvation ; a proper explication in either sense, would be true : But, to abide by the subject in hand, I waive the first, and adhere to the second.

THIS salvation distinguishes the person who believeth on Jesus, from him who believeth not ; and, in a gospel sense, is described, as the happy consequence, the only and blessed fruit of believing the report concerning Jesus Christ : i. e. that he is, before God, our free, perfect, and eternal salvation. It consists in a peculiar state of mind, an exemption from guilt, sin and fear, a possession of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. This is not only to have bread enough in our Father's house, but to sit down also at his table and eat : This salvation may be instantaneous or gradual,

gradual, as it pleases God to reveal his Son in us.

THIS salvation, as I hinted before, is obtained, on condition of believing and obeying the truth: nor does it follow, that because faith is the gift of God, and obedience the influence of his free Spirit, that these are not conditional; since we are active in both, our faculties are in exercise in believing and obeying: Hence, “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation:” And, until we have this belief and confession, we attain not to salvation in the above sense.

IN a first sense, Repentance, faith and obedience, are what constitute the everlasting righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ: his repentance consisted of strong cries and tears, of the broken heart, and contrite spirit: his deep inexplicable humiliations—such as were heard in that he feared—such as were rewarded

with

with the highest name, and the most glorious exaltation : his faith consisted in believing the promises, which were all made to him : and these he believed, through all the most discouraging scenes of life and death ; even when the terrors of death encompassed him, and the pains of hell gat hold on him : And when his faith was perfected by his works.

THE obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, is usually distinguished into active and passive. The one implying his immaculate life, and the other his submission to sufferings, and his obedience to death : all which infinite purity approved of, justifying him in the spirit of holiness, and declaring him the Author of salvation.

THESE, the Saviour, from the success of his undertakings, and his exaltation in consequence thereof, hath full power to reckon over, impute or give to the children of men ; “ for him hath God exalted with his own right hand, to be

be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sin."

OUR Saviour's repentance, faith, and obedience, are perfect and permanent: but our repentance, faith, and obedience, are neither perfect, nor permanent. But, as that which is perfect, is necessary to give us confidence towards God, he gives us *his* repentance, faith, and obedience: and when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part only is done away. We no longer depend *on* or gather *with* our own repents, obedience, and faith. The utmost that our faith, or the faith which is in us, can attain to, is to believe, receive, and appropriate, according to his will, the faith, repentance, and obedience of Christ; and in these we find salvation.

BUT, though it be true, that we know in part, see but in part; yet to experience and rejoice in this salvation, it is necessary that we should know and see in our measure.

For

measure. For it is easily seen, that, except we are personally possessed of faith, we can neither believe, know, nor appropriate the faith of Christ. Hence the necessity of faith in us to this salvation ; as there is of eating, to the man who (having bread in his house) would fill his belly therewith.

REPENTANCE, as it respects the exercise and feelings of the human heart, consists of conviction, compunction, and renovation. Light breaks in upon the mind, discovering to us the error of our ways, and the insufficiency of all our own righteousness : Compunction of heart follows, for the deception we have been under, and for the yet corrupt bias of our spoiled nature : we loath, abhor, and detest ourselves, for what we feel : more especially for that vile propensity which is in us (notwithstanding the viciousness and poverty of our nature) to trust in ourselves, and in our own righteousnesses ; in opposition to the free-grace and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ ; whom now we lan-

guish for, and pant to have every thought brought into captivity to his obedience, counting all things as loss, yea, but dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him; not having our own righteousness. These particulars manifest a change, a renewal; but this change, this renewal, withstands and over-rules our original bias, not permitting us to look for righteousness and strength into ourselves, but inclines us to Jesus, in whom we have everlasting righteousness, and invincible strength.

IN brief, the salvation promised in the scriptures, on condition of believing, obeying, &c. is, that blessed and happy state of mind, which is the assured fruit and consequence of knowing, believing, and obeying Jesus Christ, as the great, finished, eternal, unchangeable salvation: which state consists of righteousness, purity, peace, joy, and full assurance of everlasting life. This is a salvation: for we are here saved from sin, guilt, war, distress, and fear: not physically, as though we were not yet men subject

subject to like passions with others, but legally and imputatively, as the man is saved whose debts are paid, and whose crimes are cancelled; by an equal chastisement ; and withal, conscientiously : for the gospel teaches, and we believe, that Jesus Christ, through the whole of his obedience, active and passive, and in all that he obtained thereby, was still considered as those whom he came into the world to save. Hence we have an undoubted right to believe, that we are freed from sin and condemnation ; and that he hath presented us to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that we should be holy and without blemish. If our heart live in contact with this truth, we have, in perfect peace and purity, compleat salvation in Jesus ; without works of righteousness, as done by us, individually considered ; as saith the apostle, “ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Obedience here, consists in an entire submission to the will of God, as

L E T T E R II.

thus revealed and executed in Christ Jesus ; without attempting, by what *we* may do or suffer, to recommend ourselves to the divine favor, or to qualify ourselves for the reception of it, or to make adequate returns for the blessings received. Thus is Christ the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him.—Of ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, we can do nothing—but, eating him, we live by him. On the above condition, we have, we inherit, we enjoy the salvation of God, by Jesus Christ.

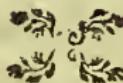
Thus would I understand and explain conditional salvation, as taught in the scriptures ; as what respects the state of believers only, in the ages of time ; and not that rest which yet remaineth for the people of God, that final determinate salvation, which God has decreed, and which Jesus has perfected, and ordained, to be the eternal state of man. What influence this salvation has on the mind, is better felt and enjoyed, than explained : nor are there any

any other means of attaining to it, than the faith and obedience already described: May the testimony of Jesus, by the hearing of which they come, produce and maintain them in all your hearts. This is the prayer and desire of

Your Brother and Servant,

(for Christ's sake)

J. R.



L E T -

L E T T E R III.

DEAR BRETHREN;

I DO not pretend to have given you, in my last letter, a perfect copy of the Arminian creed ; nay, I am well aware of the contrary. I know, that instead of our own works of righteousness and creature actings, which *they* make to be the conditions of salvation ; I substitute a total cessation from all dependence and hope on these : and a simple unreserved submission to Christ. Nor are we agreed, on the *object* of our faith and obedience.—I, professing all things that are written in the scriptures, believe, that it is not in the nature of man to *do*, nor even to *will*, what is good, and accords with the will of God. I must therefore always conclude it a

fatal

fatal mistake, proceeding from the grossest ignorance of themselves, of the scriptures, and of the power of God ; for men to pretend, to *will* and *power* in *themselves* to do what can save them, either in the whole or in part ; or even recommend them to the favor of God, or qualify them for its reception. Man, thus considered, I believe that God reconciled him to himself in Jesus Christ, who in our nature, name, and persons, fulfilled all righteousness, and inherited the promise : Hence, that glorious record, “God hath given to us eternal life, and that life is in his Son.” He hath given it to us, not as righteous persons, but as sinners ; not to us as believers, but as unbelievers : not to us as obedient, but as disobedient. Nor does man’s unbelief and refusal of the gift of God, make void *his* eternal donation, whose gifts and callings are without repentance : for if God alter his purpose of mercy and grace towards men, and recall the gift of eternal life, which he hath given them in his Son ; then is their unbelief no longer culpable , nay, it is no longer

longer unbelief, but an uncensurable sentiment. But while unbelief is iniquity, whilst such who are under its influence, blasphemously, yet with impunity, give the lye to God ; the grace which is opposed must certainly remain permanently free, full, and glorious. Hence, we fight, not as though we beat the air ; nor do we preach uncertainties to man : we hold forth to them a finished salvation, a glorious rest remaining for them in Christ Jesus : into the glory and riches of which, nothing but their disobedience or unbelief prevents their entrance.

UNDoubtedly, this is the hearing by which faith cometh ; it is wisely and graciously adapted to the helpless state of man. But O ! how widely different is this from the faith of such, who make man's righteousness the condition of salvation, they know not the helpless state of the creature, nor that he is indeed subjected to vanity. Hence, they see no reason wherefore their salvation should be finished and secured in Christ. They believe it not ; it is a doctrine repugnant to their hope and desire,

and therefore they generally meet and encounter it with hatred or derision.

LIKE the old Egyptian task-masters, they call on you to make your tale of bricks, without allowing you proper materials : they call on you to obey, without communicating sufficiency, or even giving you a certain invariable rule for the extent, nature, and properties of true obedience. When they speak of believing, they acknowledge no truth until it is believed, nor a Christ, until he is applied. Hence, that very absurd saying, so frequent in the mouth and writings of some, who would be thought to be ministers of the gospel, “ An unapplied Christ, is no Christ at all.”

BUT, I need not yet take pains to shew you, that, by conditional salvation, I understand present salvation, or the salvation of Christ, enjoyed in this life : the conditions of obtaining and rejoicing in which, are undoubtedly faith and obedience ; for, if we believe it not, we

possess it not : and if we obey it not, we rejoice not in it : yet this faith and obedience, are the free gift of him “ who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” The apostle, speaking of faith, tells us, that it “ comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” By affirming and illustrating the truth, and persuading men that they have, in Jesus, the forgiveness of sin : that they are saved in him, justified in him, sanctified and preserved in him : until, believing it unto righteousness, and confessing it unto salvation, they rejoice in him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,

HENCE, Salvation spoken of, and described in this manner, perfectly consists, not only with the free unconditional salvation of the elect ; but even with the doctrine of *universal* salvation : when we distinguish between a finished salvation, the present enjoyment, and a future enjoyment.

THE elect, where applied to the persons of mankind, in subordination to Christ, intends such, who are made choice of in time to the belief of the truth, and the joy of salvation.

THESE are chosen to this grace, not on the consideration of present; nor on the foresight of future merit in themselves : but he, whom they sought not, is pleased to be found of them : Yea, least aught should be placed to the account of human righteousness, the unerring Spirit has thus drawn the character of the chosen—“ Not many wise men, after the flesh ; not many mighty, not many noble ; but God hath chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised :” And the reason, which he has vouchsafed to give for his choice, is, “ That no flesh should glory in his presence; but he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.”

HENCE, I propose, that the elect are not a people chosen to be the objects of God’s love and salvation, to the final exclusion of others :

but a people chosen to believe the truth, and to rejoice in the salvation of Jesus in time ; while others yet remain in a state of ignorance, of what they are equally entitled to with the elect.

THE elect, who are predestinated to the present knowledge, and enjoyment of eternal life, can only attain to this happiness through faith and obedience, as spoken of before, under the article of conditional salvation. But, as Christ effects this in them, by his gospel and free spirit, it comes not, as I have hinted before, under the imputation of man's righteousness : nor is it a denial to the elect's being freely saved, since what a man possesses without cost to himself, is free to him.

SHOULD it be asked, What advantage have the elect above others ? I answer, Much every way : For “one day in his courts, is better than a thousand in the tents of wickedness ; the secret of the Lord is with them ; he hath shewed

shewed them his covenant : They have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost : Through all the vicissitudes of life, and in death, they have assurance of eternal life.

If the scriptures ascribe Predestination and Election to the sovereignty of God, they clash not with my idea of it : since there can be none other reason assigned, for his choosing one rather than another, to the belief and enjoyment of the truth, than his sovereign will and pleasure.

Do the sacred writings ascribe their election, &c. to free grace of God ? This also corresponds with the hints abovementioned, as appears from the character of whom he hath chosen ; and also from his manner in bringing them to the knowledge of the truth.

ACCORDING to this idea of Election, the consistency, and even the expediency of the apostle's exhortation, is perceptible : " Give all diligence,

diligence, to make your calling and election sure :" And, again, " Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, long-suffering," &c.

ELECTION and Predestination, thus considered, are no denial to salvation finished for all, in the person of Christ ; nor is it an objection to the future final happiness of all ; for whom Christ died : nay, it rather supposes it ; if the predestinate and elect are so called, from their being chosen to believe, and enjoy in time, what the residue neither know, nor enjoy but in eternity. But, as I purpose, towards the close of these letters, to explain myself more fully on this subject, I shall wave a further explanation of it here, to observe—That, in my first letters, I intended only a few hints to you, which I judged necessary to prepare the way to the subject on which, in particular, you desired to know my mind. Therefore, my intention is, in a few letters, to confine myself to the subject of God's universal love and salvation in Jesus Christ. I am not aware of any hurt to
your

your minds, that can proceed from it, if you are indeed satisfied with Christ; being well persuaded, that if you are really assured of the freeness of his salvation, you will no more enter into doubtful and fleshly disputation, concerning the extent of it.

MAY Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, render it more than an amusement to you! May he use it to endear his name, person, salvation, and Spirit to you! Such is the Prayer and desire of,

Yours, &c.

J. R.

LET-

LETTER IV.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WHEN we read the sacred book, let our hearts feel none other bias, than the glory of Christ alone ; to testify of whom, the unerring Spirit dictated what the prophets and apostles wrote.

IF thus qualified, we investigate truth ; we shall quickly perceive, that the love of God, and the salvation of Jesus, are, in their freeness and extent, infinitely beyond what the ancient Jews, or even the generality of modern christians, have apprehended.

IN the book we read, that “God is love :” that he hath so loved the world as to give his only beloved Son for the life of it ; and that his Son has died for the sins of the whole world : From whence we may infer, that no man is excluded from the love of God, or from the salvation of Christ.

WITH what propriety can it be conceived, that God should create beings under an unavoidable destiny to sin, and endless misery ? Does it consist with the righteousness and equity of the divine nature ? does it consist with the warnings, calls, invitations, and reproofs, wherewith he has admonished men from the beginning ? Is it compatible with his promises ? or even with the threatenings, where the sinner and the ungodly are threatened ? Nay, God our Father has taught us the reverse ; where he has sworn by his life, that he desireth not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness, and live. Who are decreed and created to destruction, cannot be said to be condemned for their own demerits, but

for the sole pleasure of God ; but, than this, there is nothing more untrue.

Will divine Justice censure men for not believing a lye ? for not believing what they never had a right to believe ; yea, what was never true to them ? Will God the Judge of all men, destroy his creatures for not doing what he never gave them abilities for ; yea, for not doing, what he decreed they should not do ? Is our Father, Redeemer, and Saviour, such an austere master, as to expect to gather, where he has not strewed, and to reap where he has not sowed ?

He, who hath seen and declared the Father, and who only hath seen and declared him, has taught us, that God loved the world, yea so loved it, as to give the Son of his bosom ; than whom, as given for the life of the world, heaven had not, in all its treasures, a richer gift, a higher and more incontestable evidence, of his love and good-will towards man. “ And, if God hath not spared his own Son, but hath delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things ? ”

Who

Who, that has tasted that God is gracious ; who, that has considered his loving-kindness, can yet hesitate to believe, that God is good and gracious unto every man ; yea, that his great good will extends to the children of men universally, without respect of persons ?

WHEN I behold the glory of the Son of man, the dignity of his person, the intention of his obedience and sufferings, the immensity of his blood, and the power and purity of his resurrection, I am ecstasified ! I cannot withhold, but am constrained to cry out, O ! amazing grace ! “ where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded.” What are the iniquities of a thousand worlds ! O Zion, what are all thy transgressions, though numberless ; when thy God deigns to purchase thee with his own blood ! What are the complicated sins of a guilty world, to this great and glorious salvation ! The demerit of the one, to the merit of the other, bears no more proportion than a pearly drop of morning dew to the deep and

wide extended ocean ; or than a dust of the balance, to the terrestrial globe : yea, the requisites to man's deliverance from sin, and from all its consequences, bear not more proportion to that glorious deliverance, as wrought in and by Jesus Christ our Lord ; than a moment of time to the ages of eternity. Such are the abundings of God's everlasting grace ! such the divinity of our Saviour's blood and righteousness !

WHO can see this, and yet start at the expression—“ All flesh shall see his salvation ?” Who can behold this, and yet be anxious to find out, among the individuals of Adam's race, such whom they may exclude from salvation, so free and extensive as is that of our Lord Jesus Christ ?

BUT, to avoid the imputation of an attempt to impose on the judgment, by an address to the passions, I shall proceed to collect a few of the most remarkable passages in the book,
speak-

speaking of the general love and good-will of God to mankind: shewing, by the way, the relation they stand in to the hypothesis of universal salvation. My intention is, next, to examine with candour, and ingenuously to reply, to what wears the face of the most material objections to this doctrine.

“In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” Gen. xxiii. 18. which seed is Christ, saith the apostle. The sum of which is, that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Christ. Nor does the text, to a simple and unprejudiced mind, need a comment. Nor shall I spend my time here, to shew the impropriety of such comments, as pretend, that “all the nations of the earth,” intend only *various* nations; or a few individuals out of all these various nations; or that the blessing, promised to all nations in Christ, intends the good example only, which they have in him; or the good instructions he has given them; or, the possibility of salvation for them, on such, or such

such terms ; or the temporal blessings which all possess through him ; with many more such like human inventions, calculated to evade the force of the promise, and to limit its grace ; since, but to mention these, is to expose their absurdity.

BUT, as I believe, that God our Saviour meant not to trifle with his creatures, but to fulfil his promises to them ; so am I persuaded that he meant to speak to their understanding and common sense, in all his promises : and not to propose theses for trials of skill, at logic, rhetoric, and sophistry. Hence, when I hear him say, *all the nations of the earth*, I readily conclude that he intended, not only all the nations inheriting the earth at some particular period ; but all that the earth hath contained from the beginning, or shall contain, to the end of time.

WHEN I hear God himself promise a blessing to mankind, my mind immediately conceives of somewhat very different from a curse : but if men are not blessed with eternal life, it is easily

easily proved, that all other blessings, so called, terminate in a curse.

WHEN I hear it promised, that this blessing should be in Christ, I readily conclude, that it is not in man: and can therefore conceive, how men may be blessed in Christ, though they may be ignorant of it in themselves.

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. This is not only descriptive of God's method of blessing mankind, i. e. in Christ; but it also denotes the continuance of the blessing. It is not in man, who is given to change, but it is in him, who is the *same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* Though all the nations be dead, yet the blessing, their eternal life, is hid with Christ in God; where it is so well secured, that they may not, by any means, be deprived of it. Nor is their present ignorance a proof that they shall not, in some future period, possess; and rejoice in the blessing, which, by the grace of God, they are entitled to.

UNTO thee shall all flesh come, Psalm lxv. 2. By all flesh, I would understand all mankind : for to this purpose is the term, *all flesh*, made use of, in the scriptures : as in Genesis, “*For all flesh had corrupted his way, upon the earth,*” and in Numbers, “*He is the God of the spirits of all flesh,*” &c. So in the text, “*Unto thee shall all flesh come.*” This promise is already fulfilled, in the person of Christ ; in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. Jesus hath, in himself, brought up, all flesh to God ; unto whom he hath presented them holy and irreprovable : nor will he cease to rule, until what is true in him, shall be true in them also : until all flesh shall come to the knowledge and enjoyment of his salvation.

THE glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, Isaiah xl. 5. This was revealed in Jesus Christ, who was the brightness of the glory, and the express image of the person of God : who was God manifested in

the

the flesh, so that angels were capable of seeing the Invisible:

Moses, and others in their day, were desirous of seeing his glory ; but saw it not. The glory which Moses was desirous of seeing, is called the face of God ; and may intend the nature and properties of Deity, with his purposes and designs. But though this sight was denied to Moses, yet God promised that his glory should be revealed, and that all flesh should see it together.

THIS promise is fulfilled in Jesus ; in him is the glory of God revealed ; and in him all flesh, i. e. all mankind were so collected, and situated, that they saw it together. As Adam, so Christ occupied all flesh, in his knowledge of the Father : he being in his office-capacity, and mystery, all flesh gathered together : his views, his enjoyments, his knowledge, are theirs ; and thus all flesh have together seen the glory of God.

Nor does this deny, but supposes ; yea, secures to all flesh, a personal sight and enjoyment of the glory of God in some future age ; when his glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

AND all flesh shall see the salvation of God,
Luke iii. 6 According to the sense of the sacred book, the promise of seeing, is the promise of possessing and enjoying : does it not follow, then, that all flesh shall enjoy the salvation of God ? As the terms, *all flesh*, in asserting the corruption of our species, manifestly include Adam and all his offspring ; there can be no just reason offered, why the same terms, when used in promise, should not have the same latitude. Hence all mankind shall see, and enjoy the salvation of God.

As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life, Rom. v. 18. To the unprejudiced mind this

L E T T E R IV.

this text needs no comment: here the plaster is manifestly as wide as the sore—and the remedy, both in its application and benefit, as extensive and powerful as the disease.

THIS text, like the pregnant comb, drops honey at the touch, and needs no pressure. Here the grace which distinguishes the ever adorable name, and inexplicable salvation of Jesus, shines in its meridian lustre. Here, the amazing freeness, and extent of love and grace, so sparkles and speaks; that the mole and the bat only can be blind, and the adder deaf! Meat is here brought out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong.

THIS text shews us the method and freeness of God's eternal grace, in the salvation of mankind by Jesus Christ our Lord. "As by the offence of one, so by the righteousness of one." By the former, without their aid, concurrence, assent, or even knowledge, judgment came upon all unto condemnation: in like manner, by

he latter, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. This is free grace indeed! here the chambers of darkness and death, teem with the rays and evidences of light, life, and immortality : and even the wandering steps of man, sabled with guilt, and leading to judgment and condemnation, illustrate and perpetuate the method and freeness of the great salvation.

THE free gift came upon *all men*, unto justification of life.—Upon all on whom judgment came unto condemnation. Hence, it is true beyond all controversy, that, as all Adam's offspring, by means of his offence, were brought under judgment to condemnation ; so it is equally true, that, by means of Christ's righteousness, Adam and all his offspring were brought under the free gift of justification unto eternal life. We have most assuredly the same revelation of God for the one, as we have for the other.

WHAT, if men do not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? Is their unbelief a reasonable objection to a FREE gift? or, is their unrighteousness an argument, that this free gift cannot come upon them by the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Have those words, a gift, a free gift, a free gift of justification unto life, coming upon all men—no meaning in them? Nay, let priest-craft, bigotry, and prejudice, sift and winnow them, their substance will yet remain: It will be for ever true, that God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.

ALL the children of Adam do not at present know, that judgment came upon them to condemnation by his offence; nay, there are thousands who deny it. But does it follow from thence, that it is not true? Quite the reverse. Their ignorance and opposition confirm the proposition, that all are dead in him. Neither does man's ignorance of it, nor even his opposition to it, indicate, that the free-gift is not come upon

upon him to justification of life. It is rather a proof of the free gift:

JUSTIFICATION of life, according to the words of the book, implies a perfect exemption from the charge of sin, and consequently from condemnation. This is justification : and justification of life, intends a justification of that life and impunity which they obtain as a free gift by the righteousness of Christ : Thus is God just, in justifying the ungodly.

If this grace be true to all, according to that great plainness of speech used by the apostle, wherefore should not all, sooner or later, possess it ? Sin, or any impediment arising from thence, cannot prevent their final happiness in this grace : because the gift which came upon them, is that of justification : which acquits from sin, and all its consequences : nor can their poverty and helplessness prevent it ; because it is a *free gift*, a good and *perfect gift*, which came from the Father of lights, with whom

whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning : whose gifts and callings are without repentance. From all which, I see no reason wherefore all men should not in some future period, be blessed with the enjoyment of eternal life.

FOR as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. xv. 22. This is a text perfectly similar in its language to the former, and therefore would need none other remarks than what I have made on the above.—But, that expositors (in my judgment) give it a sense very different from the intention of the Holy Ghost by the apostle. Commentators tell us, that as by means of Adam's offence, all men became mortal, and must necessarily see death ; so by means of Christ's resurrection and power, they shall all be made alive, or raised from the dead. Unto which I answer, If they meant that the *all* thus made alive in Christ, or raised from the dead in him, were raised to eternal life and glory, the comment would be good : but, as they intend

intend nothing less than this ; theirs is not the genuine sense of the text, as will appear from what follows.

THE text manifestly opposes Christ and his life, to Adam, and his death ; and shews the former to be as extensive as the latter. As an infallible medicine to a sore disease, as a dispensation of comfort to a scene of misery ; so is the text adapted to the helpless state of man. Those blessed words contain a declaration and promise of man's deliverance in Christ : yea, of all men's deliverance from the misery or death wherein they are involved in Adam.

BUT, wherein is the propriety of such a declaration, or promise, if the greater part of those who are made alive in Christ, are only made alive for destruction, and rendered thereby more capable of torment ? Can they receive any possible advantage, in conjunction with eternal misery ? Is not an annihilation preferable to eternal damnation ? What profit will such receive

by being made alive in Christ, who are made alive to greater and endless misery? Can this be the voice of love? Can it be the sense of the text? If so, the natural comment is this, For as in Adam all die, and according to the body mingle with the dust, and become senseless as the clay; so in Christ they shall all be made alive: some to the sense of happiness, but (by much) the greater part to the sense of everlasting torment. Except to a very few, where is the grace; where is the salvation, proposed in the text, agreeable to such a comment?

According to this method of explaining that scripture, Adam has laid the *foundation* of human misery, and Christ raises the *superstructure*. Adam has drank the deadly thing so soporiferous to all his offspring; and Christ makes them alive, awakes and quickens them to inexplicable and never-ending torment. This is a notorious inversion of the gospel, and, according to my idea, a blasphemy against Christ: who says, that he "came not into the world to

destroy the world, but that the world through him might have life.”

THERE are others, who, though they allow that all men without distinction die in Adam, yet will have the *all* who are made alive in Christ, to be all the elect only ; who, according to them, are a very small number, in comparison of those who die in Adam. Hence the phrase often used, As in Adam all *bis seed* die, even so in Christ all *bis seed* shall be made alive ; as though the seed of Christ was not so extensive as the seed of Adam. Others say, All who believe and obey the gospel shall be made alive in Christ Jesus : as if, when dead, they were to believe and obey, in order to their being made alive. Merely to mention these comments, and others of like nature, is sufficient to prove them a manifest perversion of the sacred text. And yet it is amazing to see, how greedily men swallow, how eagerly they adopt, the most strained unnatural comment ; rather than

than acknowledge such a freeness and extent of grace as the true gospel preaches!

Who but reads the text with a heart unprejudiced, and open to the impressions of truth, must necessarily perceive the *reality* of salvation, the *method* and *extent* of it? The reality of it—They shall be made alive in Christ. The method of it—As they die in Adam, so shall they be made alive in Christ. The extent of it—ALL—“As in Adam ALL die, so in Christ shall ALL be made alive.” Thus the boundings of grace are as extensive as those of sin: and Christ is declared to be as universal in *his* salvation, as Adam was in the ruin of mankind.

AND, lest the old question should recur, i. e. “Who will shew us any good?” If God has promised to make all alive in Christ, how comes it that his promise is not fulfilled, since the whole world yet lieth in the wicked one? I answer—In Christ the first fruits, the promise is already fulfilled, as it shall be in all that are his

at his coming. All mankind are legally and mystically made alive in Christ ; “ who died for their sins, and rose again for their justification.” Thus, whether we wake or sleep; we live together with him. The present ignorance and unbelief of mankind does not hinder their being made accepted in the beloved ; nor will it prevent their knowledge and enjoyment in some age to come.

BUT here I recollect that I am writing a letter, and looking back on what I have written, am convinced that it is already too long ; shall therefore conclude with subscribing myself,

Your Brother and Servant,

(for Christ’s Sake)

J. R.

L E T T E R V.

DEAR BRETHREN,

I CONCLUDED my last with some remarks on that sacred testimony of the apostle, " As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive :" I shall begin this with another quotation from the same great and glorious witness of Jesus, who, speaking of the infinite love of God our Saviour, says, " He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4. These words are not only expressive of the love of God, with the pity and tenderness of Emanuel's heart ; but they declare his positive will : " He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the know-

ledge

ledge of the truth." Who hath resisted his will? It is the happiness of mankind to submit, but their non-submission and resistance prevents not the execution of his will.

SOME are weak enough to imagine, that the Almighty must first get his creatures leave, before he can perform his will respecting them; hence they plume themselves on *their* submissions, and compliment their own great humility, in being content that the will of the Lord should be done. I am aware of some men's affecting to say, that the text only intends the willingness and desire of God our Saviour, that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. But, say they, it does not follow that all shall be saved: because the greater part choose death rather than life, refuse to comply with the terms of salvation; and thereby frustrate God's holy will and desire.

WHAT a jumble of error and inconsistency! The Creator of the ends of the earth is not absolute:

solute : he may will, yea, he may *desire* the salvation of his creatures, yet both may be frustrate, if the creature chooses to stand out ; and will neither comply with his will, nor gratify his desire !

'God has but one choice,' which is, that all should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth : but his creatures have power to put a negative upon the choice of the Almighty, whereby his will and desire are rendered of non-effect : whereas they are absolute and uncontrollable in *their* choice. If they choose death rather than life, die they must, for the Lord God of truth, who made them and redeemed them, cannot prevent it ; howsoever desirous he may be of it.

I BELIEVE I have stated the matter fairly, according to the above : shall therefore leave it to you to determine of its propriety, and consonance to truth : lest you should accuse me of mis-spending time and words to expose, what (but to such who are intoxicated with enmity

and

and pride) is in itself most notoriously false, absurd, and blasphemous.

In the sacred book, we read much of submission to the will of God; and his worshippers have often heard to say, The will of the Lord be done. But is this written, that we should admire *their* humility, and condescension, in permitting God to do his will, though it should be trying and grievous to them according to the flesh? God forbid. Yea, the scriptures were written that man might be abased, and the Lord alone exalted.

THE will of God our Saviour is absolute, immutable, and irresistible. The scriptures teach this. After many trials, possibly experience corroborates it. Is it then a mark of humility, self-denial, or lowliness of heart, to submit to his will, the fixed unalterable will of God, which neither men nor angels can resist? Nay, there is no virtue in submitting to what we cannot avoid.

THE true worshipper knows, that the will of his God is determinate: hence he will no longer strive, as the potsher'd of the earth, with his Maker. He is withal assured, that according to the mystery of the divine will, all things work together for his good; and therefore he not only submits, but rejoices in his will. Hence the expression, The will of the Lord be done: and the prayer which the Saviour taught his disciples, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

THE plain honest heart neither knows nor admits of such distinctions in the will of God, as permissive and decretive; as though, for causes arising from the capriciousness of the creature, he permitted that to be, which he had not foreseen nor decreed; or that what he had decreed, he, for like reasons, thought proper to dispense with.

To distinguish between God's prescience and his decree, favours too much of human invention and subtlety, for the simplicity of chris-

tianity : known unto God are all his works. What he foreknew, that he had decreed ; and what he had decreed, that he permits. Foreknowledge differs not from the decree, respecting events : for as God cannot be deceived, neither can he be controuled. The distinction, that God's foreknowledge of all events does not lay us under a necessity of acting, but that his decree does ; appears to me, to be destitute of reason and common sense : for God is infallible in his foreknowledge, as in his decree : what he foreknew must most assuredly come to pass : nor can there be *more* attributed to his decree.

HAVING thus considered the will of God, as sovereign, absolute, and uncontroulable, let us weigh the purport of it; i. e. that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth : note, the distinction between being saved, and coming to the knowledge of the truth. From the remarks already made, it is evident, that all men are saved in Christ Jesus
the

the Lord, with an everlasting salvation : but all men are not yet come to the knowledge of the truth ; nevertheless, he who willed the former, and executed it, according to the purpose of his will, hath also willed the latter, and according to the same purpose will execute it in his own times ; when all men shall come to the knowledge of the truth.

AGAIN, “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,” 1 Tim. ii. 6. In that God our Saviour gave *himself*, he hath given us an infallible proof of divine love. He hath given himself *unto* and *for* all : and hath hereby made manifest the extent of divine grace. “He gave himself a ransom for all ;” the term is very significant, expressive, and powerful. All mankind, by reason of sin, were in a state of bondage and captivity : he ransomed them, by giving himself in exchange for them : all mankind, by means of transgression, had rendered themselves obnoxious to everlasting punishment ; but Jesus gave himself a ransom for all,

by taking on him their condition, and exposing himself to all their woes : hence on the ransom's being found, they were delivered from going down into the pit.

IF Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, then are all ransomed : the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captives are delivered : they are ransomed from the dominion of sin, from the curse of the law, and from everlasting death. Thus stands the case with all the children of Adam, as ransomed by Jesus Christ, who, in consequence thereof, are spotless before God.

BUT this is to be testified in due time, i. e. to be made appear or known—which intends, that there is a time with God called the due time, when this truth, that all mankind are ransomed from sin, and from all its consequences, by Jesus Christ, shall be published on the house-top, shall be made manifest to all ; not in the report

report only ; but in the blessed, full, and eternal enjoyment thereof.

"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." O glorious words ! and full of grace and truth ! This is giving, not only like a King, but like a God : herein is love indeed. How this grace detects and exposes the paltry pride of human nature ! The potsherds of the earth hesitate, yea, refuse to believe and live upon their Maker's bounty. Their humility says it is *too* good, *too* free, *too* extensive : their goodness complains, that it leaves no guard against sin : their wisdom and justice cannot perceive the equity of it ; because, to include *all* is to make no distinction between the evil and the good. But, if Christ died for all, then were all dead. The former is so palpable a truth, as to be taken for granted in the apostle's argument : nor does the latter want, but has the same evidence, and is withal undeniably deducible from the former. Hence, no man

can

can with truth object to the freeness and extent of the great salvation.

"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Here is the distinction kept up as before : all are ransomed, but all have not yet received the testimony : does it follow, that they never will receive the testimony ? Quite the reverse. The apostle says, "To be testified in due time."—Which time is an appointed time ; it will come, it shall come, and will not tarry.

AGAIN, "That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man," Heb. ii. 9. Here are three particulars to be considered—the taste of death—for whom—by what means. O death ! who beside the Saviour of mankind, can describe thy taste ? Who but him can remember, and explain the misery, the wormwood, and the gall ? The word *tasted*, here indicates the sense and consciousness which he had of every ingredient of misery in death. He became obedient

dient unto death. He made no resistance, but submitted, body and soul, to their proper pains and distresses. In his silent obedience, he tacitly acknowledged his guilt, as made sin for us. He tasted death, implying, that, though there was nothing in the first nor second death, but what he experienced from every sense of speculation and feeling ; yet, in point of continuance, it was but a taste : for sometimes the word is taken in *this* sense. The dignity, eminence, and mystery of his person, qualified *him*, respecting, power and equity, to sustain and finish, in a short period, what had tormented the finite creature, with the worm that dieth not, and with the fire which is not quenched ; had it fallen on such, it would have been more than a TASTE to them. To Jesus, mighty, glorious, and gracious as he is, it was but a taste ; but to us it would have been endless woe.

JESUS tasted death for every man, for all the descendants from Adam : for them, on their behalf—in their stead—and to exempt them from

from all pains and penalties. Can words be more express? *For every man*, without distinction of nation, name, or character: and if he has tasted death for every man; as above, what shall frustrate his grace? what shall prevent their salvation? Indeed, if righteousness came by the law, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be frustrated; and his tasting death for every man, may have been in-vain: but thanks be to God, righteousness cometh not by the law; nor hath he obeyed, nor died in vain. Therefore, as he hath tasted death for every man, every man may expect to inherit the joy of his salvation.

IT is by the grace of God, that Jesus hath tasted death for every man: and his grace, in the scriptures, sits in direct opposition to all human works and righteousnesses whatever: hence there can be no reason assigned, wherefore the most wretched and worthless of mortals should not inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ.

ANOTHER witness, speaking of Jesus, says, “He died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.” Here, the whole world is opposed to such who believe and obey the gospel : the apostles and christians of that age were the latter ; besides whom, all mankind were then lying in the wicked one, and in unbelief : but, lest the death of Jesus, respecting the intent and efficacy thereof, should be, by any christian, limited to such only who believe and obey, the apostle says, “He died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world ;” i. e. for the sins of all mankind ; or of all who lay in the wicked one. Nor is it difficult to determine what the scriptures mean, by Christ’s dying for the sins of men : they certainly mean, that he endured the pains and penalties due to their sins : in consequence of which, they, the sons of men, are free ; they are delivered from the curse of the law, by his being made a curse for them, and are entitled to all the benefits of his salvation : even the every man for whom Christ died.

"UNTIL the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his prophets, since the world began," Acts iii. 21. The times of the restitution of all things, seem to me to point out the grand and general jubilee, when the servant shall be eternally free from his master, and the inheritance shall return to go no more out: but a happy and joyful possession shall be the portion of all mankind, for whom Jesus taunted death, yea, for whose sins he died. Restitution signifies, to restore to a primitive state, or to bring back to original purity and glory.

"RESTITUTION of all things," i. e. of all things suffering or sustaining loss, by the entrance of sin into the world. Shall mankind be forgotten in those times, when all things shall be restored! Man, whose nature Jesus assumed, whose person he sustained, whose fashion he was found in, and for whose sins he died! A mother may forget her sucking child, so as not to have compassion on the son of her womb: but

but God their Saviour will not forget mankind, in the times of the restitution of all things. But I shall have occasion to speak of this more fully, by divine permission, in future letters ; and shall now pass on to another scripture.

“ THAT in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ ; both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him,” Eph. i. 10. I intend to make use of this text, as well as the former, in future letters ; and shall here but just take notice, that the gathering of all things into Christ, must either imply the gathering of them into his person, that they might be included in his life, sufferings, and death, and be entitled to the benefits of his resurrection, according to the promise of gathering the people to the Shiloh : or, of gathering together into one, all the children of God who were scattered abroad. Or, it must intend a gathering in some future period, of all things into the knowledge and enjoyment of Christ ; even those,

who, until that period, are in ignorance, unbelief, and suspence.

BUT the former it cannot be, as that redemption is not yet to be waited for : that gathering has been made long since, and all the promises relating to it have been fulfilled, and rendered Yea and Amen in Christ.

IT must necessarily, therefore, intend the latter : that in some future period, the times of which are appointed of God, and at present only known to him ; he will gather all things in heaven and on earth, (i. e.) either angels and men, or such who in time have believed and obeyed ; and such who have not in time known the salvation of God, and are therefore, in comparison of the other, considered as things on earth : but here let me conclude this letter, with assuring you that I am,

Yours, &c.

J. R.

LET-

LETTER VI.

DEAR BRETHREN,

I HAVE somewhere read in story, in what author I cannot at present recollect ; of a certain tyrant, who had a bed of a peculiar construction, on which he laid whom he deemed his enemies, or such who unhappily fell under his power ; if they were shorter than the bed, they were stretched with torture to the size of it ; and if it happened that they were taller, they were lopped to the size. In like manner, Commentators, in general, treat the sacred text : having adopted a tenet, they arbitrarily stretch, or shorten the divine word, to bring it to their size ;

size; of which might be given a thousand instances.

I HAVE no pretension to infallibility, I may be mistaken: but this I can say, I have no private end to answer, no darling opinion to gratify, by my hypothesis of a general salvation; and therefore to be convinced of my error, in this affair, will not distress my soul. My intention is, to give the holy scriptures their full scope, without putting the fetters of tradition upon them, or trying them at the bar of any man's holiness, or orthodoxy. This rule I have followed in my thesis, and I hope to do the same in the antithesis, which I propose to state, and give impartial attention to.

I AM aware, that much pains has been taken, and many words have been made use of, to prove, that the *whole world*, for the sins of which Christ died, intends only the world of the elect, or the world of believers; or the world in a comparative sense: and, that the ALL, by the fame

fame chicanery, is supposed to be not one tenth of the whole. But what is the chaff to the wheat, or human invention to the simplicity and plainness of truth ?

THERE are sundry passages of scripture, which men oppose to the doctrine of God's general love, and salvation of mankind; a few of which I shall take notice of, and hope, by the influence of that Spirit who first dictated them, to point out their meaning, in such sort, as to give a satisfactory answer to the whole of what may be judged scriptural objections.

FIRST, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all who forget God," Psalm ix. 17. "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven, when the proud, and all who do wickedly, shall be as stubble." I reply—These, and all the threatenings, as well as the promises of the Old Testament, related wholly to Christ ; and had their final accomplishment in his appearance and transactions. Christ, made sin for us, sustained,

tained, as the sinner, the pains of hell. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He was numbered among the transgressors, and among the wicked in his death. Thus, in him, the wicked were turned into hell, with all who forget God ; in consequence of which, mankind, individually considered, are delivered from going down to the pit.

WHEN Christ was made a curse for us, all the threatenings wherewith the sinner and the ungodly are threatened, were executed on them in him : the authority and equity of which transaction have their rise, 1. from the will of God ; 2. from Christ's voluntary undertaking ; and, 3. from the kindred oneness subsisting between him and the people. According to which, through the whole of his obedience and death, He and they were considered in the eye of justice, as one person : and sinners without distinction, were chastised in him. This is what is called in the Old Testament, "the day of the Lord, a day of darkness, gloominess, and of the

the shadow of death. The day of Christ's sufferings, is the day of which the prophet spake : the day which should burn as an oven, when all the wicked should become stubble, and the character of the sinner cease from man, as presented unto God in Christ. For Jesus came as the refiner's fire, and as the fuller's sope ; that in the furnace of his affliction, and the washing of his regeneration, he might purify the sons of Levi: It may be asked, probably, what has *their* purification to do with the salvation of all ? I answer—I conceive the tribe of Levi to be the first fruit of the tribes of Israel : and we know what the apostle says, i. e. “ If the first fruit be holy, the lump also is holy ; and if the root be holy, the branches also are holy.” Levi was to the tribes of Israel, what Jesus Christ is to all mankind : and, therefore, in consequence of *his* being the first fruit, the whole, the lump, and the branches, of which he is the root, are holy unto God as Christ is holy.

As it is true, that Christ was made a curse for us, and that all the threatenings issued out against the sinner and the ungodly, from the beginning of time, were executed on them as comprehended and upheld in the person of Jesus: so is it true that all the promises were made to him, as the seed of Abraham, and that they are all accomplished and fulfilled in him, and on the people by him. To this purpose the apostle, who speaking of man, says, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedst him with glory, and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under him." This is not only a description of Adam's first state, but of a promised restoration. "But now, says the apostle, we see not yet, all things put under him;" i. e. we see not yet that man is thus perfectly restored.—"But says he, we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God,
should

should taste death for every man," Heb. ii. 7, 8, 9. Hence it appears, that though men, individually considered, do not yet inherit the promise; yet Jesus inherits for them, and unto him are they to look for the truth of what God has spoken. It was in this view, the apostle found satisfaction; when as yet he saw not that all things were put under him: In brief, I conclude, that all the threatenings and promises of the Old Testament have had their full accomplishment and perfection in what Christ has done, suffered, and obtained; and that they are not to be carried beyond him, or applied to any matters future to what he perfected on the cross; the revelation and enjoyment of his grace excepted. Thus, according to my judgment, there can be no just objection gathered from the scriptures, against the hypothesis of a general salvation of mankind.

AND, if we only take this observation with us; that sin, in the scriptures, sustains personal characters, we shall find no unsurmountable ob-

jections to this doctrine; nay, not in the New Testament: for then that very formidable objection, as it is thought by sundry to be, of the sheep and the goats, their being separated at the last day, and destined to different states; will appear to be nothing more than what is meant by the apostle, where he says, "we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." If sin in the scriptures is called a man, an old man, &c. yea, if sin, in a plural sense, intends the many enemies, the armies of the aliens, &c. as I verily think it does, I perceive no difficulty in applying it to the goats, and that the separation intends the eternal destruction of all sin and corruption from mankind. I am aware here of the charge of inconsistency, that will be brought against me. Have you not (says an objector) repeatedly asserted, that our sins were separated from us, and destroyed in the death of Christ? with what propriety can you then apply it to matters yet future, such as the separation of the sheep and the goats, spoken of by our Saviour? or how can you suppose

suppose a thing done, and yet to be done? To the first, I reply, I am not persuaded, that the separation of the sheep and the goats, spoken of by our Saviour, is yet future. It was so indeed to the time of our Lord's speaking it; because he was not then glorified. But why may it not be supposed, that he was then speaking of matters to be effected by his decease, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem? I can easily conceive his cross to be the throne of his glory; and that all nations were gathered there before him, and that he there made the separation between the sheep and the goats, i. e. between mankind and their sins, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats: and that the character of the sheep there drawn, entitling them to the joy of their Lord, is none other than what they have in and by him: or, that they are not saved by grace, which is contrary to the positive doctrine of the scriptures: or, should you refuse this turn given to the parable, and insist on its relating to a period yet future; still it throws no embarrassment in my way, nor

militates against the plan of God's general love and salvation of men by Jesus Christ, provided that the distinction of sheep and goats be not applied to the *persons* of mankind, which I see no reason for, I confess.

FOR, if the goats in the parable intend a part of the human race, they were such either from the decree and will of God, or from their own unbelief and disobedience. - From the latter it cannot be, because sheep and goats are of different species. It is impossible for a goat to become a sheep, such a metamorphosis has not yet been seen in nature; nor can a sheep become a goat: yet on the above supposition, the goat is judged and condemned to endless woe, for not converting itself into a sheep: and the sheep is praised, blessed, and saved, for not becoming a goat. Hence I would propose, that this distinction, if applied to the persons of men, cannot take its rise from themselves, but the source must be looked for elsewhere.

SHALL it be imputed to the will of God, that mankind are thus distinguished ? Then every man fills up his place, and answers the end of his creation. The one is formed for happiness, and the other for ruin ; nor was it possible for either to avoid his destiny. This destroys the distinction of virtue and vice, and renders censure and applause irrational. Did God create those who are censured under the character of the goats to fill up that character ? Did he render it impracticable for them to do otherwise ; so that they could not love Christ, nor his brethren, nor from such a principle do them any good office ? And must they yet be censured and damned everlastingly, for being what he made them, and for doing what he appointed them to ? Such an idea wears the face of blasphemy in my apprehension, and therefore I cannot but abhor it.

Of the like nature is the supposition, that the Judge of all the earth should publicly approve, applaud, and reward the conduct of those under the character of the sheep, when

when they acted from necessity, and not from virtue : for this is undeniably implied, in supposing such a distinction between mankind, from the will and purpose of God.

BUT, to give the text its full scope, where the King speaking to the goats, says, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye cloathed me not : sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

HERE we have the place of their destination pointed out, and also the reason of it : Their place or state of destination, is everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. But how comes it, that those goats should have what was prepared for the devil and his angels ? Does it not seem to intimate, that the difference is only in name ? or has there been any defect

defect in the foreknowledge of God, that what was prepared for one species of beings *only*, should, through accidents unforeseen, fall to the portion of others ? From my early youth (I confess) I have had many reasonings about the person of the devil : I have thought, according to the common received notion of him, that he is either omnipresent, or that there are as many devils as human creatures ; or that the devil and sin are one, i. e. the universal depravity of human nature, is the devil, whose angels are the particular corrupt passions of the heart.

OMNIPRESENCE is an attribute of him who says, “ My glory I will not give to another.” Therefore, the devil, or satan, cannot have omnipresence. How can he then be supposed to be present with every man, in every nation ? Is not this rather a vulgar idea of him, unsupported by revelation and reason ? Whether the devils or fallen spirits are equal in number to the human race, I will not pretend to affirm or deny ; on the hypothesis of their being dis-

tinct beings ; from the enmity of the human heart, against God and against his Christ : for here the scriptures are silent. I can with more boldness affirm, that there are angels of glory, many, yea, innumerable ; and that these are employed as ministering spirits, who, by the divine appointment, minister to the heirs of salvation ; yea, that they learn from those unto whom they minister, the manifold wisdom of God.

IT is not my intention to deny the personality of the devil, because I believe the personality of that unhappy spirit ; and, as him, there may be many more. But I would observe, that the words, devil, angels, &c. are often used in the scriptures in a figurative sense. Our Saviour says to the Jews, “ You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your Father you will do :” here, the devil, certainly intends the enmity of the carnal mind ; under the influence of which they came into life, and the lusts of which they followed. And the plural often in-

tends

tends only a greater fulness of enmity, and a more powerful combination of corruption.

CONSIDERING the text afore-cited, according to this idea, the devil and his angels, may be understood of the old man, or the body of sin, head and members: and then the goats are consigned over to what was prepared for themselves, and not for others.

THE reason of their destination assigned by the Judge, is truly descriptive of the nature and properties of sin; and such is the excuse of the condemned, which consists in a denial of the accusation, and in self-justification, i. e. "When saw we thee so, and did not administer to thee?"

THE sheep were to enter into the joy of their Lord: which intends (as I conceive) that fulness of purity, bliss, and joy, which their Lord obtained through his obedience unto death,

and which he entered into possession of, when received into glory : which joy the *sheep* are to enter into, but not until the goats are separated from them. May it not be understood of a removal of sin ? Should the reason be *literally* applied, it would infallibly indicate, that they are saved by their own works : but *spiritually* applied, where the king reckons to them his own righteousness, and where he considers *them* as doing what *he* has done ; the words are full of grace and truth : and that they are thus to be understood, is (as I think) plain from the following observations :

FIRST, here is a righteousness ascribed to them as the cause of their acceptance, which they were not conscious of having wrought in their own persons—“ When saw we thee so, and administered to thee ?”

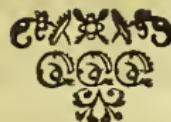
SECONDLY, Here is the union plainly pointed out—“ Forasmuch as you did it unto them,
you

you did it unto me." An intimation that Christ and the people are one: We are members one of another, and the body of Christ in particular. In that body I ever am,

Yours, &c.

(for Christ's Sake)

J. R.



LETTER VII.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WHAT acceptance my last letter found among you, I know not ; having not heard from you since (as I suppose) it reached your hands : but suspect it will not be so acceptable to you, as some of the foregoing. Some of you will have no notion of sin sustaining personal characters, and may think that my attempt to explain the text is rather chimerical. But, remember, you first solicited my thoughts on these matters, and I give them you as *my thoughts*, and not as an unerring testimony. If they do not answer your expectation, or coincide with

with your sentiments, I will grant you as full liberty to reject them, as you do me to write them.

THERE are many texts of scripture (I confess) which, in their various figures and images, I cannot with propriety explain, consistent with what I conceive to be the truth of the gospel. But yet this staggers not my mind through unbelief, with respect to the truth ; nor do I from hence impute inconsistencies to the scriptures. I always conclude, the defect is in my own understanding ; and indeed I have often proved, that what has been dark and inexplicable to me one day, has been light and demonstration to me another day. Nor does the doctrine of God's general love to mankind, nor their common salvation in Jesus Christ, depend for their truth on my explanation of the text. Nay, should I be mistaken, there are yet other resources, of which this hypothesis may avail itself in proper place.

“MARVEL not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice ; and shall come forth. They that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation,” John v. 28, 29. Those words intend, either what Christ was about to accomplish on the cross, or what was to be effected by the preaching of the gospel, or the transactions of the last day.

I THINK it is not without some shadow of reason; that I have made this distinction : for it is manifest, that the grave, coming out of the grave, &c. are terms used sometimes in the scriptures in a figurative sense, as Ezek. xxxvii. 12, 13. “I will open your graves, and cause ye to come up out of your graves : and bring you into the land of Israel ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord: when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.”

EZEKIEL was a prophet to the captivity in Babylonia, who, from their ignorance of the promise and power of God, were in a helpless and hopeless condition ; and therefore, by way of figure, considered as in their graves. The text *literally* implies a promise of their deliverance and restoration to their own land : But, as there is no prophecy of the scriptures of a private interpretation, and as they are given unto all for instruction and doctrine, I conclude, that the text has also a *spiritual* meaning, and that it intends the general state of mankind, who by nature are dead in trespasses and sin ; and therefore represented as in their graves. Out of which death, and graves, they are raised by the voice of the Son of God, who is the resurrection and the life : their *persons* to salvation, and their *iniquities* to destruction. This was effected when Jesus sustained both the one and the other in his own body and spirit on the cross : In that day, both the people and their iniquities were remembered—the one as righteous and holy in the Beloved—and the other as abhorred, de-

tested, reprobated, and destined to destruction. Thus who had done good, came forth to the resurrection of life ; and who had done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.

THIS is also true when applied to the preaching of the gospel. For then, the voice of the Son of God being heard, they come forth out of their graves ; the people are awakened, and their iniquities with them. The people, the gospel acquits; by reckoning to them the good that Jesus hath done : but condemns their iniquity to final destruction. Thus may it be said, that they who have done good, arise to the resurrection of life ; and they who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.

THAT sin sustains personal characters in the scriptures, is undeniably ; and therefore the above comment on the text cannot be censured with a just propriety : but, as some may possibly esteem it fabulous, I shall explain it in another sense ; but not in the least contradictory to, nor

inconsistent *with* what I have already said on the subject.

SOME man will say—Your comments are unnecessary, why cannot you be satisfied with the common received sense of the text, i. e. that at the resurrection, on the last day, those who have done good, shall arise to be eternally happy; and who have done evil, shall arise to be eternally miserable?

My reasons for not receiving this sense of the text, are as follow.—First, It is contrary to the positive express testimony of the scriptures, respecting the means of salvation. The scriptures affirm, that we are saved by grace, in direct opposition to all works of righteousness done by us: but to be saved, or damned, according to the good or evil done by us, is to the former a contradiction in terms. Secondly, It is contrary to another plain scripture doctrine, i. e. that there is none among men who doth good, no not one. There is none good, but one God, &c.

Again, it is contrary to the divine testimony—“ That God loved the world—that he will have all men to be saved—that he desireth not the death of the sinner—and that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world—taasted death for every man—and came into the world to save sinners.” Without reversing these, it is impossible to conceive, that our final state is to be determined of by our own doings, good or evil.

I WOULD therefore, as hinted above, offer another explication of the text, though it rather pertains to what I intend in future letters. It may respect that consciousness with which mankind arise at the general resurrection. We are told, that there shall be a resurrection of the just, and of the unjust. But, that the distinction of just, and unjust, consists of their difference in personal virtue; or in any distinguishing respect shewn by the Almighty to the persons of the one above the other, does not appear to me, I confess. But, as such who die in the faith of Christ, are conscious of righteousness and

and purity in him, and are therefore just; so those who live and die in unbelief, and ignorance of Christ, live and die in their sins, and are under the character of the unjust. Nor is this inconsistent with Christ's having taken away their sins. For what the Lamb of God, as a propitiation for our sins, has taken away, and freed us from the curse of, the conscience of the unbeliever yet retains: hence our Lord's saying, "If ye believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins." And thus, at the general resurrection, some will arise in a perfect consciousness of righteousness and salvation; and are therefore said to come forth to the resurrection of life; while such whose conscience retain their iniquities, will, under that consciousness, arise to the resurrection of damnation. Thus I take the text to mean the different apprehensions, under which mankind will arise at the last day: some in full assurance of a resurrection to life, and others under an apprehension of a resurrection to damnation. But it does not follow they must suffer what they fear. Let us rather

sup-

suppose, that the age of their sorrows is over, and that the time of their restitution is come. As I purpose to speak more fully of this matter hereafter, let this hint suffice for the present as a comment on the text.

ANOTHER objection is taken from Jude, ver. vii. “ Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after other flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

THE force of this objection is supposed to rest on the words ‘ eternal fire’, as a proof of eternal torments, and consequently a denial of a general salvation. But let me observe, that the words *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *for ever*, as used in the scriptures, very often intend only a long time : as I can shew in many instances, if need be ; and therefore the word is not always to be measured by the vulgar idea, or the common received opinion of its sense. God promised
that

that he would give unto Abraham, and to his seed, the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. And again, “I will give it to thee, and to thy seed for ever.” We read also of everlasting hills, and of perpetual mountains: and of an eternal kingdom promised to David: nor was it uncommon, for the poets of the Augustan age, to call their city Eternal Rome: and yet none of these intend what the word, taken in a strict sense, is supposed to imply. Nor can it be proved, that the word, as used in the text, intends more than a time.

BUT, if this is rejected, I am ready to acknowledge, that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah did suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. They suffered it in the type. The text does not say, that they are *now* suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, as vulgarly expressed. Their suffering was intended for an example: but there is no propriety in proposing eternal sufferings (when the word is taken in a strict sense) for an example: for such sufferings, as

in point of duration are eternal, cannot possibly exhibit an example ; because, being endless and never finished, the extremities thereof cannot be known.

BUT, supposing their suffering to be typical, there was an example given : First, of the heinousness of the offence, and then the means of expiation ; i. e. that sin was to be lost in its chastisement. To me there appears to be a wide difference between justice, and cruelty : Justice, in all its decrees and chastisements, has only in view the annihilation of the offence ; and therefore it can inflict the adequate punishment, consistent with a pitying heart and eye, towards the sufferer. But the properties of cruelty are to plague mankind, and to torture the human soul : nor has it any other view of the end of chastisement ; it distinguishes not between the person and the offence : and therefore, instead of having an eye, in its chastisement, to the correction and extirpation of the offence, the durable and exquisite tortures of the

the offender alone fills its prospect. This is indeed the nature and properties of a *fiend*. But the *human* heart also, fallen, revolted, and depraved as it is, is deeply tinctured with it : hence it is (notwithstanding the interposition of a Saviour's blood, and that he bore the chastisement of our peace) that men are so attached to the doctrine of eternal torments.

ETERNAL torments pay no debt. Eternal torments cancel no offence. Eternal torments have no satisfaction to divine justice. Eternal torments are inconsistent with divine purity ; because such a state, instead of extinguishing, accumulates offence. Eternal torments are an absolute denial of Christ's dying for our offences, and rising again for our justification.

Is it not equally absurd, to impute the eternal torment of the creature, to the will and pleasure of the Creator ? This does not consist with one attribute of the divine nature—not with justice: As a man may as justly be cen-

sured and condemned for the colour of his hair, or the features of his countenance, as for doing what he, from the divine appointment, was under an unavoidable necessity of doing.

NOR is it consistent with purity: God will not, for his own pleasure, appoint mankind to destruction, and lay them under the constraint of iniquity to qualify them for such a destruction.

NOR does such a decree consist with the love and mercy of the Almighty: though these are what the scriptures teach, and persuade men to the belief of, as the means of giving honor to his name. But, having spoken somewhat of this in a former letter, I shall wave the argument here.

OUR Saviour, from the dignity and glory of his person, was capable of abiding devouring fire, and of dwelling with everlasting burnings. These being the chastisements of our peace, he
sus-

sustained them ; in consequence of which we are exempt from penal fire. Of this chastisement, and of the destruction of sin, and the salvation of the sinner by means thereof; all the destructions under the Old Testament are typical : such as the destruction of the old world; that of Sodom and Gomorrah; that of the Egyptians; the Canaanites, &c.

THESE were all figures (though painful unto thousands) of what was to be accomplished in Jesus, of the separation which was to be made in him, between the people and their sins : and of the full and final destruction of the latter, through his blood-shedding: This may account for God's dealing with the nations *now* in a manner so different from what the Old Testament exhibits.

UNDER the Old Testament, compassion shewn to their fellow creatures, was a capital offence in God's chosen people : yea; though it was extended but to defenceless women, and their

tender infants: a dispensation without an ingredient of mercy. Its language was, "Tooth for tooth, and eye for eye ;" yea more, to destroy and root up who had given them none offence. I need not tell you, how contrary this is to the doctrine of our Saviour, who has taught us to love even our enemies: for this is familiar to all who read the New Testament.

If the letter limits the sense of the Old Testament, if the transactions thereof were not figurative and typical, importing good in futurity even to the sufferers, I can perceive no difference between Joshua and his Israelites in Canaan, and Cortez and his Spaniards in America. They seem to have had an equal plea for their invasions, to chastise the inhabitants for their idolatry, and to profelyte them to the true religion: or rather put them to the sword, that without molestation they might possess their country. I have read somewhere, that many ages after the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua, there were pillars or monumental stones found in

Africa,

Africa, with the following or similar inscriptions on them—“ We are they who fled from the face of Joshua the Robber, the son of Nun.” If true, it proves, that the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, though heathen, were not savages, or total strangers to humanity and morality; and therefore to be hunted down as wild beasts. Nay, they thought themselves causelessly invaded, and could not but consider their invaders as a banditti of spoilers, robbers, and murderers. So thought the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru, when the cruel Spaniards broke in upon them. What must the Canaanites and Americans think of that God, whose favorites their cruel invaders professed themselves to be, and by whose commission they pretended to act? It was impossible for them to conceive, that he was just and equal in his dealings with them, much less could they persuade themselves that he was love; for love worketh no ill to its neighbour. But the matters of the Old Testament are not to be literally canvassed, and accounted for: they have reason and spirit in them:

them: they were typical, and ordained to teach the Jews the way of salvation by the Messiah. Canaan was a figure of the rest that remained for the people of God. The Canaanites were figures of sin, and of those enemies of our souls, who prevent our entrance into that rest, until they are destroyed. Joshua was a figure of the Saviour, destroying those enemies, and giving us rest. This is supported by the different characters of type and antitype, and the general consent of the scriptures. The type being but the shadow of things to come, and not the very substance of the things, has always its attendant defects; to teach us that we must look beyond, even to the antitype, for the reason, perfection, and spirit; and the end of that which is abolished.

HENCE, though the mystical shadow may not, in all particulars, answer to what it represents, yet this is no denial of its being the shadow of such a thing; and indeed, if it did not come short in its efficacy, manner, &c. it would be

no longer the shadow, but the substance. To instance, Joshua was appointed to give the people rest; but this was only typical, and did not amount to the spirit and perfection of what was promised; as appears from the apostle, who says, "If Joshua had given them rest, then would God not afterwards have spoken of another day."

IN brief, I conclude, that all the transactions of the Old Testament were typical, which acquits them of injustice and cruelty. But they were all abolished in Jesus; unto whose sufferings and death they all referred mankind, for the end of their appointment. Since which, what was not only lawful but instructive, is now in the *imitation* unlawful, cruel, and inhuman. Thus we may perceive the difference between what was transacted before Christ, by the express ordinance of God; and such transactions as have been similar to these, since the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: the former

er were according to godliness, but the latter were cruelty and injustice.

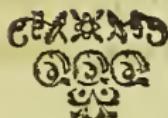
But some man will say, Does not this imply a distinction, in point of present happiness, at least between the people of former and those of latter ages ? I answer—It does, and this the scriptures not only suppose, but affirm in sundry places ; and shew withal, the removal of such a distinction by the coming of Christ. Until Christ, the world were under a typical dispensation : the Jews represented the church, or mankind personally : while the other nations were figurative of their sins and uncleannesses, and therefore were subject to typical destructions : which destructions were all emblematical of the pains of death and of hell, even those which Jesus endured for the salvation of man : and therefore, by way of figure, are spoken of as the thing itself. Hence, the inhabitants of Sodom, &c. are represented as suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, while they

they suffered it only in the type of the sufferings of Jesus; and therefore those visitations, when threatened, were limited to a certain time. But I feel I grow tedious, and shall here conclude this letter, with assuring you that I am,

Yours, &c.

(for Christ's Sake)

J. R.



O

LET-

etc

LETTER VIII.

DEAR BRETHREN,

GOD hath declared in his law—That he is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him : but that he will shew mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments.”

As there are many instances in the Old Testament, of the destruction of nations, cities, tribes, and families, for their sins : so in all these cases, the iniquities of the fathers were visited on the children : the children, though helpless

less and innocent, were together with their parents doomed to suffer death ; the parents *only* being guilty of the transgression, which brought this common ruin on them. But this does not appear to me to be the sense of the text ; I rather think that the iniquity of the fathers, is the sin of Adam ; and that the visitation of his sin upon his children, intends the typical visitation ; of which I spake in my former letter. The continuance of which, until the third and fourth generation, intends until Christ : who, about the fourth generation from Adam, reckoning to each generation a thousand years, made his appearance, that all the typical visitations might meet in his person, as the antitype and substance of all those things ; and in consequence thereof, cease from man and beast. Thus, all those visitations had their final end in Christ : for in him the iniquities of the fathers being perfectly expiated, and no longer existing, they could not yet be visited upon their children.

: THIS was the glorious period, prospective in the words of the prophet, where he says, "What mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge ? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have any more to use this proverb in Israel," Ezek. xviii. 2, 3. Again, another prophet says, " In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," Jer. xxxi. 29. To me it is plain beyond uncertainty, that the time here referred to is the day of Christ : and it strongly corroborates what I have advanced before. It is pretty evident, that this proverb had been used in Israel from the first, and that it was formed from God's declaration in his law :—“ that he would visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children,” &c. This declaration is so exactly similar in sense to the proverb, in my judgment, that I can see no reason for retaining the one if we reject the other. Hence there is a particular time mentioned by
the

the prophet, when this proverb should cease from Israel, because the source and cause of it should be dried up, and done away : “ And it shall come to pass, like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict ; so will I watch over them to build, and to plant, saith the Lord,” Jer. xxxi. 28. It was on the accomplishment of this, that the proverb was to cease from Israel. And what does this text hold forth to us, but our loss in Adam, and our recovery in Jesus Christ ? In Adam we were plucked up, broken down, thrown down, destroyed, and afflicted ; so are we built again and planted in Christ, where the visitation of the fathers iniquities upon the children hath ceased for ever ; and we shall no more complain, that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” In this salvation, “ every one shall die for his own iniquity ; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” Equal to another saying, “ The soul that sinneth it

shall

shall die." In him who tasted death for every man: every man has died for his own sins; and every man who hath taken the four grape, has had his teeth set on edge.

MANKIND were so comprehended in the person of Christ, through all that he did and suffered, that the soul that sinned died, and every man suffered for his own sin. This is a doctrine familiar to an apostolic christian, who can say as the apostle said, "I am crucified with Christ." All this tends to confirm my proposition, that Christ was the third and fourth, or the generation unto whom, and no farther, God would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. Until then, the people were considered as haters of God: therefore, is it said of them that hate him. This is a character, according to the scriptures, applicable to all the children of Adam, considered in themselves: "for all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God."

LETTER VIII. III

THEREFORE, the perfect character of loving God, and keeping his commandments, belongs to Jesus Christ our Lord, and to him only: but as we are made the righteousness of God in Christ, as Christ occupied our nature and persons, in all his doings, sufferings, and obtainments, he has cloathed us with his own garment of salvation, and robe of righteousness; nor is he ashamed to call us brethren. Hence, we are of him who loved God and kept his commandments, and therefore *we* obtain mercy,

“God will shew mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments.” Will he not shew mercy to *all* that love him and keep his commandments? Surely he will. If the sons of men are supposed to be the lovers of God, and the keepers of his commandments, intended in the text, why should the divine mercy be limited to *thousands* of them only? Yea, would not the text then say, he will shew mercy unto ALL who love him, and keep his com-

commandments? Common sense, I am persuaded, will adopt the affirmative. This consideration also contributes its mite to the support of the doctrine of Christ, i. e. that he is the perfect, supreme lover of God, and keeper of his commandments; on whose account God sheweth mercy unto the thousands that are *of* him.

BESIDES, loving God, and keeping his commandments, have a higher claim than mercy: let the offender, the debtor, and him who has nothing to pay, implore mercy, and receive forgiveness at the hands of the judge, or creditor: but loving God, and keeping his commandments, have a higher, a much higher claim. This character appeals to justice and purity, and demands divine love, complacency, and delight.

BUT some man will say, If the case be as you represent it, with what propriety can you make Christ an object of mercy; since it must be confessed, that he loved God, and kept his

commandments? I answer, I do not make *Christ* an object of mercy, but such only who are of Christ; as his seed, his children, his descendants; who, in opposition to such on whom God visits the iniquity of their fathers, have had the righteousness of *their* Father remembered and rewarded upon them, unto mercy and salvation. They are *of* him as his children. They are *of* him as the spoil of his cross, as the travail of his soul, as the purchase of his blood. They are *of* him as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Hence, as the sin of Adam was remembered and visited upon *his* children until Christ, who took and put away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of himself: so now, by Christ's loving God, and keeping his commandments, God shews mercy unto thousands of them that are of him, as saith the apostle, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.—That as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 20, 21.

I WILL not call this a digression, because my aim has been to shew, that the divine severity exercised on the children of men under the Old Testament, whether (by the commandment of God) through the agency of man, or by his own immediate finger, were all typical of that eternal fire, torment, death, and misery, which, as the just punishment and allotted wages of sin, Jesus Christ our Lord had undertaken to endure for the deliverance of the people. And, that it is hence the chastisements and destructions of the Old Testament are called *everlasting*, *for ever*, &c. And, that from hence the fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, is called *eternal fire*; and not from its duration, as some conceive. Therefore, for any objections that I have yet heard or conceived of, and for reasons already mentioned, I am still under a necessity of thinking, that God loves all mankind—that Christ died for all—and that all may possibly be finally happy.

BUT,

BUT, there are other texts of scripture, which both Calvinists and Arminians make great use of, to limit the salvation of Jesus. The Calvinist will ask me, Whether Christ does not say, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me," John xvii. 9. I answer, I believe Christ did say so: but this saying proves not the error of my hypothesis. Our Saviour, here, is immediately concerned for the perseverance and success of his apostles, from whom he was about to depart; which he knew would fill their hearts with sorrow, and whom he foresaw would be exposed to innumerable difficulties, for their testimonies sake. And, as the spreading of the gospel would greatly depend on their stedfastness, it was necessary that they should be particularly kept: hence he says, "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me :" signifying, that at that time he had not the world in general, but his disciples particularly in view. Or, that the blessings which he was then soliciting on behalf of his disciples, were peculiar to

them ; and were such as respected their manner of passing through life. But the text is no denial of our Lord's praying at other times, for such who were not as yet his disciples ; yea, of his praying for the whole world ; so far as respecting their final salvation. We are assured, that he prayed for his murderers ; and that one who knew the mind of Christ, thought it right, that prayers and supplications should be made for all men.

IT was necessary, for the present comfort and future support of his disciples, who were present when the Saviour offered up this prayer, to know how particularly he interested himself on their behalf ; and hence the peculiarity of the phrase.

THAT his disciples were the persons intended in the text, is evident from the description given of them in the context : and that in contradistinction not only to the world, but to such who might afterwards believe, as appears from

the

the words, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.”

THIS description of the persons for whom our Lord then prayed, shews very plainly, that the persons intended were such who were *then* his disciples. But, as this prevented not his praying elsewhere, for such who should believe on him through their word; neither did it prevent his strong cries, tears, and death, for the sins of the whole world. If we only distinguish between the apostles (respecting the divine interposition in their favor, and the measure which they were possessed of) and other men, yea, even *christians* in general, it will appear that

that the distinction made use of in the text is merely comparative : for in comparison of the apostles, mankind, yea, *christians* in general, are but as the world, " I pray not for the world," i. e. that all the individuals thereof should be thus blessed, kept, and supported through life, "but for them which thou hast given me," to be the witnesses of my death and resurrection ; that they may be thus blessed with especial and extraordinary blessings. In something of this manner should the text be explained, as I conceive ; and not so as to exclude the world from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

BUT the Arminian will yet combat me with another text : Does not Christ say, " For if ye believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins ?" John viii. 27. There is no purification beyond the grave ; how then can they be saved who die in their sins ? I answer, the term being *in sin*, has a twofold sense in the scriptures ; sometimes it intends the state of nature

ture (antecedent to our redemption by the blood of Jesus) wherein the whole world were dead in trespasses and sin. But from this being in their sins, Jesus Christ has delivered mankind, by an equitable and plenary redemption. Hence the apostle to the Corinthians shews, that the resurrection of Christ is an undeniable proof that we are not in our sins : his obedience, and death, perfected and suffered in our nature, name, and persons, have legally freed us from all charge of sin : “ Who is he that condemneth ? it is Christ that died, yea, rather who is risen again.” From which I gather, that it is impossible for mankind to die in sin unforgiven, or from which they are not justified by the blood of Jesus, and innocent in the eye of God*.

BUT

* “ Tho’ grace may have reversed the condemning sentence, and sealed the sinner’s pardon before God ; yet it may have left no transcript of the pardon in the sinner’s breast : The hand writing against him may be cancelled in the court of heaven, and yet the indictment run on

BUT there is another sense, in which the scriptures speak of men, as being, living, and dying in their sins ; and which is the sense of the text under consideration. This sense implies a continuance in unbelief : for men may, by unbelief, retain and hold fast to their guilt, and fear, and torment, the iniquities which the blood of Jesus hath expiated, and which God hath justified them from . for a child, an heir, though Lord of all, differs not from a servant, while in infancy and ignorance ; but, having the same sentiments and feelings, has the same servile hopes and fears. Thus his apprehension, sense, and feeling, gives the lye to the resurrection of Jesus. For, though the latter bears witness that we are in our sins, the former positively asserts the contrary, and refers us to what is present with us.

the court of conscience : so that a man may be safe as to his condition ; but in the mean time dark and doubtful as to his apprehension ; secure in his pardon, but miserable in the ignorance of it." Dr. South, vol. 2d. p. 512.

CONSCIENCE, according to some, is represented as an innate idea, and law of truth, in the human soul; which, if properly attended to, will infallibly conduct us to ultimate happiness. But to this hypothesis, both revelation and reason forbids me to subscribe. Revelation assures me, that man has, by nature, no light, no wisdom, knowledge, nor strength, whereby he should direct his soul into the way of truth. And reason tells me, that conscience distinguishes the rational being, and hath its foundation and rise in the faith and sentiment of the individual. That mankind are by nature without faith and sentiment, is not only proveable from the scriptures, but from experience also. I confess it is difficult to point out the nation so perfectly savage, that no trace or tradition of the revelation of God is to be found among them: because all have heard, yea, verily, the sound is gone unto the ends of the earth. Yet it does not follow, that those glimmerings proceed from innate principles, or ideas, or from what

is vulgarly called natural conscience ; nay, the contrary is manifest. These traditions, though but faintly perceptible among them, are judged to be of a divine origin, only from their having a supposed shadow of consonance to the revelation of God. By the revelation of God, I mean the bible ; and this general reference to it is an acknowledgement of its pre-eminence in all things, above every private spirit.

CONSCIENCE is the judgment of the mind, formed on the faith of certain principles. Wherever a man is perfectly savage, and has no principle, he has no conscience, but is as the brute. Where he has principles, or sentiment, according to these, such is his conscience. Hence, the difference between the Mahometan, the Jew, and the christian, in their divinity, and morality, and in all their dependent hopes, joys, and fears.

NOR has the christian man the same conscience which he always had. To instance—

when

when unawakened, and under the influence of education, tradition, and example only, his conscience was as formal as his religion. Conscience, equally indulgent with sentiment, tolerated the fallies of corrupt passion ; nor could it record the evil beyond the dictates of sentiment. But when the commandment comes, when the understanding is enlightened, to know the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine law, we have new sentiments : it is not enough for us here, to have the form of godliness, but we must be possessed of the power thereof. We can perceive no happiness, nor even safety for us, short of being perfectly holy, in body, soul, and spirit. These are *now* our sentiments, and *these* give birth and nourishment to a new conscience. This is a delicate and tender creature, so contrary to that which expired with our first sentiments, that it cannot bear the least appearance of unheavenly passion : but, according to the dictates of sentiment, it takes cognizance of, and reproves, not only the evil work

and word, but the thought also, however momentary ; and even the most involuntary motion, though hated and detested by us. Under this dispensation, our principles and sentiments lead us to seek salvation, in our own personal righteousness and holiness : but being here continually disappointed, and convinced, that we are, after all our repenances and reformations, but the unclean thing ; and our righteousnesses but as filthy rags. The conscience consists of sin, guilt, and fear, and may be termed, an impure and miserable conscience, an evil conscience, &c. Thus the conscience is always formed upon, and proportioned to the principle and sentiment of the mind, be it what it may : But when it pleases God to reveal his Son in us, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we perceive, that all our sins are expiated and obliterated in *his* blood-shedding : and in the purity of *his* life, our righteousness and holiness are perfected for time and eternity. The truth of which is verified,

verified, and proved, beyond all controversy, in *his* glorious resurrection : in which we are begotten to a lively hope. This gives us another conscience than we have yet been possessed of.

BUT I would still aim at being more explicit, by professing to see and believe, that Jesus Christ *personated* mankind, through all the particulars of his life, sufferings, and death ; nor did he fail to represent or personate them in his triumphant resurrection. Our obligation to obey the law, in order to life eternal ; our sins, and penalties due to them, were all made Christ's in his doings and sufferings ; and *his* resurrection state, in all its success, power, and purity, is ours : “ he being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Upon this view and faith of the gospel, the judgment which we form of ourselves, is according to Christ. Has he fulfilled all righteousness ? So have we. Is he justified ? So are

we. Is he accepted of God? So are we. Does he live for ever? So do we: for he hath said, "Because I live, ye shall live also:" hence, we are taught to reckon ourselves dead *indeed* unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ our Lord:

THIS appearing to us *now* to be the doctrine of truth, we have a true christian conscience; a conscience formed upon the principles of Christ: a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: a conscience that retains no sin: for the worshipper once purged, hath no more conscience of sin; but is made perfect, pertaining to the conscience. Thus, respecting the conscience, a person may be said to be in his sins, or not in his sins, according as he believeth on Jesus, or not believeth on him. And thus I would understand the text: "If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins." But this has no allusion to the final state of man: for, from the text, it is mani-

manifest, that their being and dying in their sins, is wholly owing to their unbelief: but unbelief is a lye against the truth; the truth is, that Jesus is their Saviour, who hath saved them *from* their sins: that he is their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: but unbelief influencing the mind to reject the truth, the conscience formed on this principle, retains, in its sense, and guilt, and fear, the very iniquity which the blood of Jesus has expiated; and which God remembers no more. *Unbelief* in its term, supposes a resistance of truth, yea of revealed truth, yea, of permanent unchangeable truth. For on that moment, the matter which unbelief opposes, ceases to answer to the characters of truth; the opposition ceaseth to be, unbelief is no longer unbelief: it is no longer criminal, but praise worthy.

To be brief, I conceive a man's dying in his sins because he believeth not on Jesus, to be no argument against all his sins being propitiated,

remit ted, and blotted out before God, through his blood, whom, being ignorant of, he rejecteth. Nay, the contrary is true; and appears, in that the misery of man is charged to unbelief; which holds fast what God has put away; and denies the truth of what God, who cannot lye, has declared on his word and oath: hence, in the apprehension of unbelief, sin is yet untaken away; and such who die under this influence, die under the sense, guilt, and fear, of what Jesus Christ their Lord, has eternally freed them from the pains and penalties of. Therefore, their distress is not from God by way of chastisement, or punishment for sin; but from themselves, from their personal ignorance, unbelief, and self-righteousness.

BUT it does not follow, that because they die in their sins, they shall never be delivered and brought to the knowledge of the truth; nay, in future letters I hope to make the

contrary appear; by shewing that the miserable shall be restored to the joy of God's salvation. In this hope I conclude; with assuring you, that I am,

Your fervant,

(for Christ's Sake)

J. R.

CHARLES
GREGORY
WY

L E T T E R IX.

DEAR BRETHREN,

AS there are some of you, who are far enough from believing that all mankind will be saved: so are there others, who profess to believe, not only that all men shall be saved, but that death shall administer to them an immediate entrance into glory. To this opinion, I cannot subscribe. Revelation and reason forbid me. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ, particularly noticed in my last letter, make me sensible that men not believing in him may die in their sins: and he has withal declared, that where he is they shall not come.

FOR one man to die in his sins, and another not, certainly implies a difference, and such a difference, as intends somewhat more than such momentary feelings, as distinguish men in the article of death.

NOR indeed are men always distinguished in death, according to propriety of character ; for the wise man often dieth as the fool dieth : the difference, therefore, lies principally in a subsequent state, wherein the one is happy, and the other not.

AS you are not unacquainted with the holy scriptures, you cannot but know, that they abound with passages which I might quote with just propriety, to prove that all mankind do not pass immediately from death to glory ; but these, for brevity sake, I omit. To observe— That Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and not death. But if death sets men free from their miseries, and administers to them an immediate entrance into glory, then death is their Saviour, and not

Jesus Christ ; then would despair and lunacy be the perfection of faith and wisdom ; and suicide be approved of, and applauded.

FOR who would not approve, yea, who *ought* not to approve, of a man's making use of the means which he has in his power to render himself happy ?

THIS argument is not only deducible from the hypothesis of all men's being immediately glorified at death ; but it is necessarily implied in it : yet the sacred text, which is not only the revelation of God, but the source and guide of true reason, by contradicting the inference, destroys the hypothesis : for faith the apostle, “ if a man strive for the masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully,” 2 Tim. ii. 5.

THIS text, I confess, has various beautiful constructions, which it would be criminal in me to pass over in silence, though they do not

immediately connect with the thread of my argument, I shall therefore beg leave to make a few remarks: necessary, as I apprehend, to the elucidation of the text.

To the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath in all things the pre-eminence: the lawful strife for the masteries, in the principal and first sense, relates.

No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. Jesus Christ was chosen of God to be that soldier; and cheerfully accepting the office, and engaging himself to accomplish the warfare, was ordained and appointed the captain of our salvation.

JESUS, the good soldier, entangled not himself with the affairs of this life. For while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head. He had neither houses, nor lands, nor money,

money, nor friends, but depended for support upon the equity and justice of him who had chosen him to be a soldier.

A CERTAIN prince noted among his troops a soldier of a sickly and feeble habit of body, who nevertheless still signalized himself in the fight ; courting danger, and defying death under every shape ; his courage was conspicuous above his fellows. His prince admired his valour, and determined to recompense it. He commanded his physicians to use their utmost skill for the restoration of his health, without which he was incapable of enjoying riches or honors. They obeyed, and succeeded. But the king observing that soldier (now sound and strong) was not so forward and pressing in the battle as formerly, demanded the reason of it : Unto which the soldier replied, Your majesty by restoring me to health, hath made me in love with life, and capable of enjoying it : hence I am not now so lavish of it, as when my want of health rendered life insipid and obnoxious to me.

BUT the Captain of our salvation denied himself in all things : chosen as a good soldier, to accomplish the warfare of the helpless, he entangled not himself with the affairs of this life : he neither sought nor received honors of men ; nor did he aim at accumulating riches.

HE said of all who hear the word of God and keep it, “These are my mother, my sisters, and my brethren :” and this he said to shew that he was not influenced by partial affection.

HEALTH, property, and passion (where the faith of Jesus is unknown) are the only sweeteners of life. The enjoyment of *these* makes death undesirable, while the want of them renders life intolerable. Who is in possession of *these*, is frugal of life ; and will preserve it as long as he can : but who is destitute of them, chooses death rather than life, as the last resource of the miserable.

THE Saviour bare our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows, and was all his days on earth, a mourner. Property he had none; nor, as I have hinted before, was he influenced by a partial affection; he was therefore in perfection, that military character which the apostle drew, as qualified to strive for the masteries.

FROM his kindred relation to the people, the right of redemption was inherent to Jesus, and therefore his strife for their recovery was lawful. Again, his strife was lawful, from the will of the eternal Father, who chose him to the office of Redeemer, and invested him with a rightful claim to the undertaking. Again, he strove lawfully, in that he used no cunning, sleight, nor craftiness, while he wrestled, ran and fought for the masteries; but by dint of pure merit, obtained the victory in all things.

To such who know the scriptures, and the power of God, it is needless for me to say, that

he was qualified from his perfect and universal temperance. We are to distinguish between the office-capacity, and the individual, in the person of Jesus : according to the former, he comprehended the people, and their *iniquities* in himself : and they and him being considered as one person, the chastisement of their peace was equitably inflicted on him. But according to the latter, —there was no guile found in his mouth · he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and higher than the heavens. Thus qualified for sufferings and conquests, no weapon formed against him could prosper, and every tongue rising against him in judgment he was ordained to condemn.

JESUS strove for the masteries ; he strove lawfully, and succeeded. The glorious morning of his resurrection, exhibited him triumphant over all opposition. The law, and sin, and death, and hell, or what beside disputed the title, or impeded the path of the sinner to eternal life, lay conquered and slain at his feet. But O !

what pen of man, or angel's tongue can describe the love, the grace, the great good will of the glorious conqueror! When he had trodden down strength, and had for ever subdued all opposition, he smiled upon the helpless sons of men, and said unto them, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome." When I forget his praise, let me cease to exist.

THE strife for the masteries may also intend the apostles and ministers of Jesus, who should be free from such entanglements of life, as retard their pursuit of the divine commission, to preach the gospel, &c. But, should men under these characters strive for the masteries, yet are they not crowned, except they strive *lawfully*: neither with success in the end, nor with a divine plaudit in the attempt. The only lawful strife here is by communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: By these, through the various exigencies of life, they are preserved from all entanglements with its affairs: by these they obtain the masteries, and

and are crowned : “ Hold that fast which thou hast; that no man take thy crown,” said the Saviour to the angel of the church of Philadelphia.

BUT where men strive according to human inventions, by rules, orders, and the dictates of man’s wisdom, they strive unlawfully ; and notwithstanding their art, labour, and pretended success, they are not crowned. Not the desert, nor the cloister, nor voluntary celibacy, nor vows of poverty, warrant a lawful strife : nor will the judges crown who pretend by *these or such* means to have obtained the mastery.

THE text is also explicable to every private christian, who from the first of his setting out in the christian religious life, was wholly intent, by the most determined strife, upon obtaining the mastery.

LONG (perhaps) did he strive to deliver his soul out of the hand of the oppressor, to extir-

cate himself from sin, guilt, and fear, and to obtain righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost: but neither his fasts, nor prayers, cries, nor tears, would effect it; nay, he could not so far succeed, as to be able with confidence to appeal to the judges.

But when the Spirit of truth taught him to gather with Christ, to run, wrestle, and fight, in the argumentative spirit and power of the blood-shedding death and resurrection of Jesus; lo, then he succeeded; his strife was lawful, he obtained the masteries, and was crowned by the judges; even by Moses and the prophets: “Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.”

Jesus Christ our Lord (his free, full, and extensive salvation) is the only *lawful* method and argument of our strife for the masteries; against the law, and sin, and death, and hell,
and

and against him who had the power of death, even the devil.

O JESU's glorious name ! it is full of grace and truth. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ : by him came the truth of the ancient promise, that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the seed of Abraham. For he comprehending mankind universally in himself, in his active, and passive obedience, they were, together with him, entitled to the blessings which he obtained.

By Jesus came also the truth of the threatening ; that the soul that sinned should die : for in him, in his humiliation, sufferings, and death, the sinful sons of men were chastised with an equal chastisement : yea, received at the Lord's hand double for all their sins. O ! glorious grace, and truth ; they came by Jesus Christ our Lord, and point out to us the lawful strife for the masteries.

OUR strife now to enter in at the strait gate, our strife now for the masteries, depends not on works of righteousness done by us; but upon the blood-shedding of Jesus *alone*. The blood of Jesus *alone* is our lawful strife for the masteries: by that most precious blood we triumph over all opposition, and are more than conquerors.

HUMAN nature, being burdened, pants for deliverance; and naturally strives for the masteries: some, to drown the sense of their woes, betake themselves to riot, or to means of intoxication: while others fly for refuge to the arms of death. But these are unlawful strifes, and will cover the victor with shame and disgrace, instead of glory and honour. He only strives lawfully, who has recourse to Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus is the true balm of Gilead, and a sovereign remedy for all human woes: for of all other means of consolation, it may properly be said, miserable comforters are ye all.

THE man who strives for the masteries, over the disturbers of his repose, over the antagonists of his soul, by a voluntary death, is not only justly reprehensible for his fear, or pride, or cowardice, but most egregiously mistaken in his aims, and disappointed in his expectations ; for the judges will not admit of his being crowned : and he may find to his amazement, that the miseries which he by unlawful means sought to avoid, are still upon him ; with this additional reflection : he has *now* by the death of the body, no amusement to divert his feelings, or thought, for a moment, from the miseries that surround him. The passions, which are the origin of human misery, and which prompt men to strive for the masteries, by the use of unlawful means, are not of the body, but of the mind. It may therefore be conceived, that these passions attend, and sway the human being in its spiritual state.

MAY we not suppose, that Cato was mistaken in thinking to escape the power of Cæsar, by using

using the sword against himself. Was he not compelled to take with him into the world of spirits, the passions which excited him to the act of self-murder? Was he not still exposed to what rendered life so intolerable? To me it appears far from being improbable. It has more than the appearance of equity and consistence; the strife was unlawful, he could not be crowned.

BUT whether man seeks death, or death seeks him, yet death is not his saviour; nor is there a dispensation of the gospel committed to death, that it should preach immediate glory to such who die in their sins, and of whom Jesus says, “Where I am, ye shall not come.”

IF ALL men pass immediately from death to glory, without distinction; to what purpose is the gospel preached, and what are the benefits annexed to the faith of Christ, especially where men are called upon to suffer, yea, to lay down their lives for his name’s sake? To *me* it appears

pears impossible to point such benefits out : if all men, believing and obeying, or not believing or obeying, shall equally pass through death immediately to glory. But it is needless to combat with multiplied argument, what, without the appearance of reason, or any plausible scripture gloss to support it, must in itself appear a manifest absurdity.

HERE somebody, whose patience is exhausted, will ask me two or three questions in a breath — What is the situation of unbelievers after death ? How are they to be delivered ? When shall they be delivered ? I reply, the state of unbelievers after death is not a state of punishment ; as this would be a contradiction to the *testimony* which their unbelief resisted ; and which, from its doubtfulness and denial of the said testimony, derived its ungodly existence. The recorded testimony is, that God hath given to men eternal life in Christ ; while unbelief consists in a resistance and denial of this grace ; blasphemously giving the lye to the

God of truth himself. But, if even such who doubted and disbelieved this testimony, are to be punished after death, then, the testimony which they resisted, was not *true* in itself : then God had not given to them eternal life in his Son. That this life was not given to them, on condition of *their* faith and obedience, is evident from the charge always exhibited against unbelief, i. e. it makes God a lyar : but this it could no longer do, than the free gift of God remained : therefore the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ, was *to* them and *for* them, when in disobedience and unbelief : as faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, even when in uncircumcision. The gift of eternal life certainly implies an exemption from condemnation and punishment : and the *permanency* of that gift, is a proof, that the state of unbelievers after death, is not a state of punishment.

THE state of unbelievers after death cannot be a state of punishment ; because Jesus Christ,

who tasted death for every man, bare the chastisements of their peace ; when the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all : nor does it consist with the justice and equity of the Most High, to exact from man the debt already paid by the blood of Jesus ; or to punish, in the individuals of Adam's offspring, the crimes already cancelled in the sacrifice of that Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.

BUT the state of unbelievers after death, is a state of unhappiness and misery ; arising solely from their unbelief : they know not, they believe not, that Jesus hath put away their sins by the sacrifice of himself ; and therefore they are oppressed with guilt and fear : and *these* are in proportion to their use or abuse of knowledge ; to their receiving or obstinately rejecting the divine evidences and demonstrations of grace and salvation ; as our Lord sheweth, where speaking of Capernaum, he says, “ It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.”

THE state of unbelievers after death, is a state of suspense : oppressed with guilt and fear, they are compassed about with doubtfulness, and uncertainty, respecting the final period. They dread the approach of what the souls from under the altar cry for. Have you any conception of a miserable man upon earth, a man without hope, and without God in the world, in whose bosom burns the unquenchable fire, and on whose vitals preys the gnawing worm ; a man overwhelmed with guilt and fear, putting off the gift of God from himself, and though suffering the most excruciating torment, yet madly dashing from his lips the *only*, the *infallible* healing potion ? Such a man you will say is miserable indeed. But whence proceeds his misery ? It is not that the Lord's hand is shortened, or that there is no balm in Gilead : Nay, God is good and loving to every man ; and Christ hath tasted death for every man : and therefore the creature is not miserable from the want of bowels in the Creator,

nor

nor from any limits fixed by his decrees to the salvation of Jesus : respecting its freeness, fulness, or extent. Wherefore did the prodigal son attempt, when involved in misery, to accommodate himself to the diet of swine ? was it owing to a lack of bread in his Father's house, or to a contraction of paternal bowels ? Nay, but to his own pride ; to his opposition to his Father's grace ; unwilling to submit to his clemency, and to be dependent on his bounty. And such is the case with man : his unhappiness is owing wholly to his own ignorance, pride, and unbelief.

SUCH unhappy people we have known upon earth, yea, it is a character which I once sustained myself. Therefore, if a man, from unbelief and its concomitants, may be rendered so miserable as the above (though beloved of God, and saved in Jesus Christ, in whose blood he hath a perfect redemption, even the forgiveness of his sins) so may an unbeliever

liever be miserable after death, though there be no chastisement or punishment from God upon him. Hence, I consider the state of such, to be a state of guilt, fear, and suspense, proceeding from unbelief: from which they shall have deliverance in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

As to the *means* of their deliverance, I know no other than Jesus Christ our Lord: he will testify to them in due time, that he gave himself a ransom for all: that he accomplished their warfare, and pardoned their sin. And when they hear *this*, the voice of the Son of God, they will live. Then shall they know, that the mercy of the Almighty is over all his works; and that he hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. For, as their unhappiness is owing to the want of that faith and obedience, by which men believe and submit to the righteousness of God: so shall they be inspired with these

when

when they hear the voice of the Son of God :
when all with one heart, and one soul, shall
join in praise to God and to the Lamb, for
ever and ever, Amen. I am,

Yours, &c.

(for Christ's sake)

J. R.



LETTER X.

DEAR BRETHREN,

MY letters on this subject, are drawing towards a conclusion. I intend but this one; should it therefore be tedious from its length, or on some other account, I shall hope for your patience.

THE scriptures speak of eternities, or ages, during which, who died in their sins, were held in a state of suspense or imprisonment: and impelled by fear, looked only for judgment and fiery indignation to devour them, as adversaries of Jesus. Of those ages, and during them, of the state of unbelievers, we find undoubted traces in

in the volume of the book. An apostle tells us, That Jesus Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit : by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison : which some time were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.

THESE spirits were undoubtedly antediluvians, or such who perished, and died in their sins, in the deluge. They are said to have been in prison, when the Saviour was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, i. e. according to consciousness, they retained their guilt and fear, and were in dreadful suspense, respecting futurity. Such is the state of imprisoned spirits ; their ignorance, unbelief, and disobedience being their only chains : In those chains they lay waiting for the judgment of the great day, dreading their trial, and apprehensive of condemnation.

WHILE thus circumstanced, our Saviour being quickened by the Spirit, went and preached to them: and that he preached *deliverance* to them, is not to be doubted. They were under no other punishment, than what consisted in their own ignorance, unbelief, enmity, and disobedience. And therefore when the Saviour preached to them, *these* must necessarily fall before him: while the spirits, so long enslaved, entered now into the liberty wherewith he had made them free. This put a period to that age, which had continued (with respect to the state of these separate spirits) from the flood.

So from this æra of salvation and grace, to the close of time, there may probably be another age or eternity; when such who already are, or who yet may be unhappy and miserable, as above; shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.

THE trumpet's sound on the day of jubilee, was typical of this glorious voice; as was the jubilee

jubilee itself, of this wonderful period. It was the ordinance of the All-wise, that when seven times seven years were rolled away, the jubilee should be proclaimed. Various are men's opinions concerning the signification of the word jubilee; but I join those who think it comes from the word HOBIL, *to bring*, or call back, because then every thing was restored to its first possessor. Then was the servant free from his master, and the inheritance returned to its original owner. The seventh day was the sabbath, and (as the apostle to the Hebrews shews) a type of the rest remaining for the people of God; as which, it was part of the gospel preached to the Jews. The seventh year was a sabbath year, on which they were forbidden to sow their field, or to prune their vineyard; yea, they were not to reap nor gather what grew of its own accord; but the sabbath of the land was to be meat for them all. This also implies, *that faith and obedience*; *in and unto* the righteousness and salvation of God in Jesus Christ; so necessary to the peace and happiness

of mankind. To cease from our own works, neither to sow, nor to prune, nor even to reap, nor to gather, what grew of its own accord, was not a small proof of self-denial and obedience : while to make the sabbath their meat, and to live on the ordinance of God, was a glorious instance of the faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen ; and which is the cause and maintenance of gospel obedience. This is the distinguishing character of believers on Jesus. This is the sabbath which those who believe enter into, where they cease from their own works, as God ceased from his. But such who believe not, enter not into this sabbath, or rest ; but live in the neglect, if not in contempt of the sacred ordinance : such are they who live and die in their sins.

THERE is yet the jubilee, which in its *extent* of mercy and salvation, still far exceeds. Thus who came short of the blessings of the former, were notwithstanding included in the sal-

salvation of the latter ; and, as the elapse of seven times seven years ushered in this glorious epoch, why should we not expect, that the seven thousandth year from the world's creation will introduce the grand jubilee ? This, I confess, is merely an opinion, and what I will not undertake to affirm, yet I am not alone in this opinion ; for sundry, both Jews and Christians, have conjectured, that the world should end in the seven thousandth year, i. e. two thousand from the creation to the flood, two thousand from the flood to Christ, and two thousand from Christ to the end. For argument in support of their hypothesis, they refer us to the use that is made of the number seven in the scriptures, both before and after Christ ; but especially in the books of Moses, where seven days produce one sabbath day, and seven years one sabbatic year, and seven sabbatic years one jubilee. From whence it is inferred, that seven thousand years will produce the grand jubilee, the closing scene for eternity. Nor, if this last thousand years

of the seven be considered as one day (towards the evening of which may probably be the deliverance of those who died in their sins at the dissolution of matter) will it be unscriptural? for in the scriptures (upon similar considerations as I take it) we are taught that a thousand years are but as one day.

THIS period may be what the apostle calls, the dispensation of the fulness of times, when he will gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth in him. What shall I say to this passage of sacred writ! It is big with heavenly tidings, it is light in the Lord! and its brightness dazzles the eyes of men and angels—while such who distinguish its beauties, and believe its realities, are as men that dream: their mouths are filled with laughter, and their tongues with singing. Holy and just is that reproof wherewith the Almighty reproves the sons of men: “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself.” It is customary among men, yea, it is *natural* to them, to

con-

consider their own frames, dispositions, feelings, and opinions, as picturesque of sacred Deity.—Hence they aim at setting bounds to the goodness of God, and to the riches of his love : to the freeness, fulness, and extent of his salvation, they constantly object, ‘It is too good to be true ;’ as if the human mind had a capacity to conceive of goodness, beyond the power, the love, or will of God, to exercise towards his creature ! But to return to the sacred text.

“THE fulness of times,” certainly respects some period not only future to the æra of the apostles, but to that of scripture utility. “The fulness of times,” i. e. when all things reported of in the scriptures, shall receive their final accomplishment : “The fulness of times,” according to the mystery of his will, his good pleasure ; and the purpose which God hath purposed in himself. The purpose and will of God leave no place for contingencies : With the Almighty there is a time fixed for the execution
of

of his will, which neither heights nor depths, nor breadths, nor lengths, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, may hasten or retard. “The fulness of times,” i. e. the time for the redemption of the purchased possession ; alluding to the jubilee, when the purchased possession was redeemed, and restored to its owner ; according to the ordinance of God. This purchased possession appears to me, to be that impunity, life, and happiness, which Jesus has purchased for mankind ; but which numbers of them, on various accounts, have forfeited : having sold them, refused them, discredited them : so as having deprived themselves of the *enjoyment* of those blessings, they are greatly miserable, until the grand jubilee, or the dispensation of the fulness of times ; until the redemption of the purchased possession, when the possession purchased by the blood of Jesus for mankind shall be redeemed out of the hand of the oppressor, to be enjoyed by the lawful heirs for eternity. .

For these times there is a particular dispensation reserved, which is called, “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” Every dispensation of God to mankind, even from the beginning, has been with additional evidence of his love, and grace to them; and with a (still) brighter effulgence of his glorious salvation. But the dispensation of gathering together in one, all things in Christ, was reserved for the glorious period of the fulness of times—until which period, those things were distinguished and separate: but *here* they are sought out, collected, and gathered into Christ. This gathering into Christ, respects *consciousness* only; for the gift of God, where he gave us to Christ; to be his fulness, and the reason of his undertakings; to be the spirit and salt of his sacrifice, and the gathering of all the children of God into his obedience and death. These, I say, were all antecedent to this gathering spoken of in the text; therefore the latter must respect *conscience* through the knowledge and belief of the truth.

THE distinction of things, to be thus gathered into one, as in heaven or on earth, are no denial, in my judgment, to its being intended of mankind *only*, who will at that period be found in heaven, or on earth; as they wear the image of the heavenly, or the image of the earthly. That the scriptures speak in this manner, is well known; and these would I follow as the more sure word of prophecy. Mankind, as they die in the Lord, or die in their sins, may be considered as being in the image of the heavenly, or in the image of the earthly; and consequently things in heaven, or things on earth. Unbelievers are considered as things on earth; while such who believe *in* and obey the Lord Jesus, as the way, the truth, and the life, are the things in heaven. In the dispensation of the fulness of times, the distinction hitherto kept up between *these* shall cease; they shall all be gathered into one, even into Christ, where the one great salvation shall be in common to the whole.

As I conceive the dispensation of the fulness of times to be yet future, so do I, that matters inexpressibly interesting to the sons of men, shall then be made known to them ; and that the text is to be considered in that light, as importing salvation, endless health, and joy, to all things in heaven and on earth.

THIS "fulness of times," the apostle calls, "the end," speaking of which he says, "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." It is extremely difficult, yea, perfectly impossible, to point out a time, however momentary, when Jesus Christ was not subject to the Father, in every sense that the term will bear. With what propriety can it then be said of him, that he shall become subject in some *future* period ? Nay, he cannot be the Son intended in the text ; but some rebellious hostile, and as yet, unsubdued son, is there spoken of, who, when the end cometh, shall become subject to the Father. For reasons such

as these, I confess myself totally ignorant of the Son mentioned in the text, as at present not subject to the Father, mankind excepted : being aware, that they are in a collective sense, spoken of in the scriptures, as the Son, the Son of God, &c. and, as I take it, the Son not wholly subjected to God, even the Father, until the end. But then the prodigal shall return to his Father's house ; and the Son, in the most comprehensive sense, become subject to the Father, that God may be all in all.

THIS period is what the apostle distinguishes with the very significant name of *due time* ; when Christ's giving himself a ransom for all, shall be the testimony. I have already spoken of Christ's given himself a ransom for all : the testification of which is reserved for that period called *due time*. Due time respects the time fixed by the will of God, wherein he will make known to those who have been hitherto ignorant of them, the unsearchable riches of Christ. To testify is to witness, to certify, to make appear,

or known. What is the subject? Christ “gave himself a ransom for all:” And he will bear this testimony on that day, Jesus Christ the chief shepherd and bishop of souls. To whom will he testify his salvation? To *All*, for it belongs to all. In brief, the text appears to imply, that Jesus Christ will in some future period, testify to all that he gave himself a ransom for them: nor is it possible, that any testimony of this grace can be more natural, more convincing, and forcible, than that of giving them the perfect and eternal enjoyment of the liberty wherewith he hath made them free.

An apostle calls this last, this distinguished and glorious epocha, “the times of the restitution of all things;” where speaking of Jesus, he says, “Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things,” Acts iii. 21.—That the times here spoken of, were future to that of our Lord’s ascension into glory, is undeniably (yea) they are represented as a state

state subsequent to the finished salvation of Jesus, and final : when all things shall be so settled and fixed as to undergo no further change. As I pretend to no knowledge of divinity above what the sacred scriptures teach ; Neither do I believe that these have any private interpretation, dependent on the visionary or acquired wisdom of man, in contradistinction to their analogy and rationality. Hence it is impossible for me to read of the “times of the restitution of all things,” without conceiving of the happiness of all things—i. e. the restitution of all things to Jesus ; which being his by inheritance, gift and purchase, are until *then* in great part in the hand of the enemy. Hence the psalmist, “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool”—*Then* shall death, and hell, and unbelief, and fear, and guilt, give up whom they have held in captivity, to Jesus Christ the head of all things, as his undoubted inheritance, and the indisputable purchase of his blood : when whatsoever

whatsoever contributed until *now*, to with-hold their souls from happiness, shall cease to exist, and fear and trouble shall be no more.

THE restitution of all things to man, which are his by Jesus Christ, and from the enjoyment of which he may hitherto have been with-held by the enemies of his peace. Briefly, the restitution of all things, intends a perfect undoing of all that sin hath done or caused ; this it is to testify that he gave himself a ransom for all : In this he supports the claim of all to eternal life, on the principles of restitution : *in* all things, and *of* all things, made to divine justice and purity in his obedience and death.

. THE times of the restitution are undoubtedly marked in the holy book, in the text which at present is under notice : it is said of Jesus that “ the heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things :” Hence I conclude, that on that appearance of our Saviour, which

which the scriptures teach us yet to look for, this restitution will take place. Of this appearance of our Saviour, the angels bare witness to his disciples at his ascension ; “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” Acts i. 11. Of this his coming both our Saviour and his apostles have often spoken : and towards the close of the sacred book we read, “ Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him : even so, Amen,” Rev. i. 7. This appearance of Jesus, is spoken of by the prophet Daniel ; “ Behold one like unto the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Antient of days, and they brought him near before him : And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion

minion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 13, 14. Nor can any thing less than the restitution of all things, portend to the full accomplishment of that prophecy; where the whole of mankind are given and subdued unto him, to serve him; and his kingdom rendered eternal and unchangeable. Of this his coming speaks our Lord himself, in Matt. xxiv. 30. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

I AM here aware of an objection to the hypothesis I aim at establishing.—It will be urged, that this coming of Jesus is so far from portending peace and joy to all, that the contrary is manifest, from its being declared that they shall *mourn* and *wail* because of him, rather

than *rejoice*. I answer—Tears are not always marks of misery and distress; they are sometimes the fruits of joy, and undeniable testimonials of inward repose and delight. And in this sense are we to understand the words of the prophet, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only Son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born,” Zech. xii. 10. I have always been influenced to understand, and view those words in a gracious promissory light; and not as threatenings of misery and destruction to the sons of men. They intend the mournings and wailings of faith and love, and are, in the promise, opposed to that hardness of heart and impenitence, which naturally distinguish mankind. This, I think, appears *still* more manifest, when we consider, that this mourning and wailing is not limited to a *number*, as to the non-elect, the unbelieving, the disobedient, &c. but extended to every eye,

to all the tribes and kindreds of the earth : which implies *all* mankind, according to my judgment. Therefore those wailings cannot be the wailings of destruction ; for these are applied to a number only ; but *those* are applied to all without distinction. The wailings of destruction are never applied to all, nor are all any where threatened with them. As they therefore manifestly imply, what all shall partake of, it is more consistent with revelation and reason, and much *more* so with the love of God, to conclude, that *salvation*, rather than *damnation*, is intended by the wailings of all the tribes of the earth, at the coming of Jesus.

THIS period I consider, as “the times of the restitution of all things.” Then shall they look unto him whom they have pierced. Under the Old Testament, the paschal lamb was ordained to be slain by the whole assembly of the congregation ; as a figure of Jesus being pierced

by all mankind. For (the reaſon and intent of his death understood) it appears that all the children of Adam, both Jew and Gentile, were accessaries to his death ; in that he died for all. The iniquities of us all were laid upon him, and he was wounded for our transgressions, and his soul was offered for our sins : yea, saith the apostle, “ for the sins of the whole world.” And as those, who by their iniquities caused his death, with all its shame and torment, may with propriety be termed his crucifiers, so may they be said to have pierced him. To look on him whom they have pierced, implies more than contrition, arising from such a conscious view : for the end and design of his sufferings considered as bearing our iniquities, to exculpate our persons : It appears, that as from the contact ſubſtaining between him and us, in the article of his death, we may be ſaid to have pierced him ; ſo our piercing him, in this ſenſe, interests us in all the benefits arising from his blood-shedding and death : therefore, to look

on him whom they have pierced, implies an appropriation of these benefits : a consciousness of his dying for our sins, in consequence of which, we are justified in him. Hence, if every eye shall see him, if all shall look upon him whom they have pierced, then shall all on that day be conscious of salvation and happiness in him ; and the time of his glorious appearance prove “the times of the restitution of all things :” when to him the Son of man shall be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom —that all people, nations, and languages, shall serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

THE scriptures speak of things, sometimes as they are with God, and at other times, as the ignorance, unbelief, and fears of man represent them ; hence, that difference and seeming contradiction, with which they are taxed by unbelieving critics. I have already hinted, that where

where they speak of the resurrection of the just, and of the unjust ; and of some arising to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of damnation ; they respect the different *consciousness* under which mankind are in their death, and at their resurrection : and their different views and apprehensions in their rising, to the general appearance on that solemn day. The one arises, conscious of righteousness, and in full assurance of eternal life. But the other, conscious of sin and guilt, arises in dreadful suspense, looking for judgment, and fiery indignation. But it does not follow, that they stand *thus* distinguished in the eye and purpose of God ; who having loved mankind, and given them grace in Christ, he beholds them only in that grace and person. Both you and I have known at one time or other, the representations of unbelief and guilty fear, to be the perfect reverse of things as they are with God : and which, at some period future to that of our distress, we knew to be so. But

while

while under the deception, what miseries did we not feel? What terrors are there, which did not then invade our bosoms? what dreadful apprehensions, that did not then disturb our repose? Nor had we any other means of deliverance than Jesus Christ, revealed, known, and believed on. But when favoured with this grace, when made acquainted with the salvation of Jesus, we could plainly perceive, that our former terrors were altogether groundless; being simply the effects of ignorance and unbelief.

FOR days, or months, yea, possibly for years, we were tormented with the guilty creations of distempered fancy; the terrifying coinage of an affrighted imagination. But yet, though the cause was fictitious, the effects were real; we were indeed unhappy, and the miseries which we professed to feel, were unfeigned.

WHY may not this be the case with others for a longer period; since, before the Eternal,
a thou-

a thousand years are but as one day? We have seen amongst men, who, from the same cause, have been all their life subject to bondage, and to the fear of death; and yet, at their last hour, have been given to understand, that they had no cause of fear, from any limitations in the love of God: no cause from any deficiency in the salvation of Jesus, to afflict their souls for a moment: but, that in the times of their greatest distress, their title was good, and their claim indisputable to the joy of their Lord.

THE case is exactly parallel with such who die in their sins, and continue in that miserable suspense spoken of before, until “the times of the restitution of all things.”

THUS, according to your desire, you have my thoughts, without reserve, on the freeness, fulness, and extent of the great salvation. Was I aware of any dishonour to Jesus

Ius Christ our Lord, from the publication of these letters; of their being injurious to society, or hurtful to individuals, I would take care that they should not extend beyond your perusal.

BUT, as the *contrary* appears to me to be true; conscious of the uprightness of my motives, I am content they should be printed and published: in order to which (having attentively read them) I desire you would return them to me, as I have kept no copy thereof.

IF it shall please God, our Saviour, to bless what I have written, to the instruction and consolation, though but of a few among men, I shall have the reward I seek, and what will abundantly recompense me for all the reproaches unto which these letters may possibly subject me.

BRETHREN, farewell, take me with you into the Holiest, nor ever forget me before the throne of God and the Lamb, *in* whom, and *for* whose sake, I am,

Your Brother and Servant,

J. R.



LET-

LETTER XI.

DEAR BRETHREN,

TO finish, with my last letter, our correspondence on the subject of a general salvation, and all its relatives, was my sincere intention: but, as you now ask me, What manner of persons they ought to be who believe these things? and solicit an answer; I feel my pen inclined to comply with your desire, though aware of the difficulty of the undertaking.

BETWEEN self-righteousness and profaneness, the path is narrow; so that there are but few

who find it: and fewer still, who with an upright perseverance walk therein.

THE description of this path, and of the walk of the upright therein, will, as I conceive, contain a full answer to your letter; and in particular a solution of your leading question: by shewing what manner of persons the worshippers of Jesus ought to be, and in reality are, while they support that character.

A DETERMINED soul, and a firm step are necessary; or men totter, stagger, slide, and fall from the terra firma of the gospel, into the swamps and mires of self-righteousness on the one hand, or down the rocky precipice of profaneness on the other.

THERE is a petition in the Psalms, which I can never sufficiently admire: these many years my soul hath adopted the words (as I believe) in their reason and spirit: and in all her aspirations and prayers to God her Saviour, makes not only

a constant, but a necessary and gospel use of them : “ Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.”

IN words, I confess my poverty ; to say what I *conceive* and *feel* in the use of this petition : How very poor, then, my explanatory attempts, compared with the gospel majesty and ultimate sense of the sacred text ! but yet suffer me to contribute my mite.

ON reading this, who are conversant with my writings, will naturally recur to my glance on the subject, in a former publication : I am aware of it, I confess it : the propriety, beauty, and sense of the words, compel me to repetitions, and to disregard the imputation of tautology.

By the joy of God’s salvation, I mean what the despairing mariner feels, when floating on a plank, in the midst of a wide tempestuous ocean, tormented with hunger and thirst, and
expiring

expiring through fatigue : He is unexpectedly taken up by a ship providentially directed into that path.

By the joy of God's salvation, I understand what the condemned criminal feels, when dragged up from his cell, on the morning appointed for him, to receive the wages of his iniquity : he is surprized with a free and full pardon.

BUT what are these when compared with the spiritual and eternal ! By the joy of God my Saviour's salvation, I mean, what that man feels, upon whose vitals the never-dying worm has preyed ; in whose bosom the quenchless flame was kindled ; when the blood of sprinkling sets him free.

OH ! what is then his joy ! who can describe it ? He is as a man who dreams, his heart is filled with laughter, and his tongue with singing. Freed from doubt, from guilt, from fear ; and

as the lily of the field, so arrayed, that Solomon in all his glory could not compare with him : his joy is great ; it is joy infinitely surpassing, what the increase of corn, and wine, and oil, produces.

IN many hearts this joy rushes with impetuous torrent ; regardless of prudential bounds, it sweeps all before it : Thought, reason, argument, are so deluged, that we can have no recourse to either ; but for a season passively float upon the swelling tide.

WE read of the disciples of Jesus, that they wondered, and believed not for joy : this was the joy of his salvation, infinitely surpassing their hope and expectation. That *fear, sorrow, distress*, should impede our faith, and prevent our believing, is not at all surprizing : but that joy should do it ; joy, arising from the manifestation of the wished for, longed for, desired object ; is what some have experienced, but what few can account for.

HOPE and fear mingle in every desire of the human heart ; the compound is necessary to form and support a proper balance : for we sink as lead, or mount as a feather, in proportion to the impulse and prevalence of these passions.

WHEN fear predominates, and drags the soul down to bondage ; hope struggles for her deliverance, and rescues her from despair. Again, when hope is elevated with prospect, and all her soul on tiptoe ; fear insinuates it may be a deception ; it is beyond a rational, and too *too* great a felicity to be true.

THE jostle of hope and fear, renders joy tumultuous, and for a time prevents the mind deciding the grand question, Is IT TRUE ? Revelation, the parent of hope, is in the affirmative, and persuades men ; but the misgiving human heart, foolish and slow to believe, the origin of fear, is on the other side of the question ; and says, it is too good to be true ; yea it says it, of what amounts to the plainest demonstration.

THE

THE joy of his salvation, intends that happy state, where the tumult is over, and perfect love and peace have taken place. Where reason and spirit walk hand in hand, and the way of God with man is justified. “ Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,” is a petition not limited to the cry of a soul in distress, as having lost the Comforter, and begging the restoration of what it was once possessed of ; but it extends to the prayer and demand of faith. That joy, which thou, my Lord, my forerunner, and captain of my salvation, hast obtained through obedience and the suffering of death : The joy which was set before thee, when thou enduredst the cross and despisedst the shame ; that joy I claim as my property : I had lost it, but thou hast recovered it, restore it unto me : for thou art faithful and true. It is mine from thine own declaration ; for thou hast said, “ The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them.” The joy of thy salvation is mine, from the reason and spirit of thy undertaking : from thy kindred relation to me, the right of my redemption was thine :

from thy being found in fashion as a man, thou hadst the capability of humiliation to death, yea, even to the death of the cross. In my name, nature, and person, thou engagest thine heart, to draw near unto God : thou hast fulfilled all righteousness, thou hast trodden down strength : thou hast vanquished sin, and death, and hell, and hast called upon and required helpless man to be of good cheer ; inasmuch as thou hast overcome the world ; and again, directing thy speech to us, “ This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. Restore unto me therefore the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.”

THE joy of God our Saviour’s salvation, renders all his ways, ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace. What is the professed worshipper of Jesus, without this joy ? A mere formalist, who preaches from selfish motives, who hears the word preached, reads, prays, and converses on divine subjects, from sentiment destitute of affection : either acting from duty, as a slave

who

who dreads the whip, or, as persons under particular disorders of the body, who, when resolute to be active, are obliged to offer violence to their feelings. For, in such cases, the least movement feels irksome, yea, unnatural ; and is not atchieved without a sentimental resolution ; and even then exercise is unpleasurable. The door grates upon its hinges, and the wheel drags upon its axle-tree for want of the oil of joy.

BUT where the joy of his salvation is, the name Jesus is as ointments poured forth : yea, because of the favour of his good ointments, the virgins love him. Then it is known that his service is perfect freedom, and his sabbath a delight. Such manner of persons the worshippers of Jesus *ought to be*, and in reality *are*, while they support that character, by walking in the light, as he is in the light.

BUT, though the joy of his salvation be so necessary to the consolation of the sons of God, yet the enjoyment is not without a careful and

cautious watch kept up in the soul ; lest our feelings should engage our attention, and divert the eye from Jesus. Thus, where we petition for the joy of his salvation, it immediately follows, “ and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” That Spirit which requires nothing of me, in order to my perseverance in the joy of thy salvation. For, taught by experience, I know I can *do* nothing, I feel I *am* nothing ; unequal to the easiest conditions, I pray to be upheld by thy free Spirit. That Spirit, the Comforter, who speaketh not of himself, of his own work, operations, impulses, and reformations, influencing us to gather with these : but incessantly glorifies Jesus, who by receiving of the things that are his, and shewing them unto us, invariably instructs and inclines us to gather with him.

“ *UPHOLD* me with thy *free Spirit*,” that Spirit who, while he cultivates and prepares the mind for the reception of truth, and pours the oil of joy, even the joy of thy salvation, abundantly into the soul ; yet, with pointed finger and

and irresistible persuasion, converts all our attention to the cross : There, says he, is the Beloved, there is your God, your Saviour, your husband, your brother, your friend : he is your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, and redemption : O ! he is your All in All. Let even your eye towards him be the eye of the chaste virgin.

O God my Saviour, though I am sensible that the joy of thy salvation is absolutely necessary to my comfort, and happiness through life, and in thy worship, and therefore cannot but pray for it : yet suffer me not to be in bondage to the most spiritual enjoyment ; let no pleasing frame, nor feeling of my soul, however heavenly it may be, take place of thy person, nor ever permit the joy of thy salvation to rival thy salvation itself. “Therefore, uphold me with thy free Spirit.”

IT may possibly be objected, that such distinctions are needless niceties.—I reply, Real christianity hath its delicacies, which none are aware

aware of, but such who know the scriptures and the power of God. I mean to apply them to such only who believe what is contained in the former letters: and concerning whom you enquire, where you ask me, “What manner of persons they ought to be who believe those things?”

I AM sensible that I am not yet in your path; you had in your enquiry, an eye to demeanor and conduct, while I have been speaking of somewhat seemingly foreign to the subject. But, before I begin to build, permit me to lay the foundation, and in excuse of my manner, to tell you—that that man’s conduct can never be right, whose heart is wrong.

CONTRARY to the common received opinion, I averr, that in proportion as men recede from the virtue and glory of the gospel, and become guilty slaves to their passions, they grow legal and self-righteous.

ON the other hand, profaneness and irreligion, in such who may be supposed to have once known the truth, take their rise from wisdom, faith and holiness in their own conceit. When you read this, possibly you may censure it, as an odd conceit of mine. I confess it wears such an appearance, yet it consists with truth, as I shall have occasion to shew.

THE christian conscience, I am persuaded, will vouch for the truth of what I say : for says the christian, while I walked in the light, I loved my brother, and saw none occasion of offence or stumbling in him : I measured to him, the same measure as I did to myself ; i. e. the free and full salvation of Jesus, without works of righteousness, as done by man. While I walked in the virtue and glory of the gospel, unto which Jesus hath called us, by his life, death, and resurrection, all was light, love, liberty, and heavenly mindedness. But when by means of some irregular appetite, the gratification of some lust, or passion, not looking to

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; guilt has been incurred, the scene has immediately changed; the glorious vision vanishes: Moses is read, the veil is upon the heart: the love, grace, and lenient genius of the gospel, have no longer their charms; but are despised, and forsaken, for the austerity, rigour, and censure of the law.

HERE the mind undergoes a change equal to a figure used by an apostle, “The dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

UNDER the sense of guilt, compared by the lip of truth, to the gnawing worm; it is natural for man to fly to his own repentances, prayers, and reformations, for the redress of present grievances, and for the reason and ground of his future expectations: instead of applying to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and to his precious blood, which cleanseth from all sin. The mind and conscience being defiled,

men lose their *relish* for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and grow doubtful of its virtues, and by degrees of the authenticity of the gospel.

WHEN I perceive the man, who once believed and rejoiced in the free salvation of Jesus, turn again to the law in search of perfection ; and from extolling the person, life and death of the Saviour, as the sole source of his present happiness, and the only foundation of his future hope and expectation ; I say, when I perceive such a one set up a talker for his own righteousness, boisterously avowing, or slyly insinuating the utility, yea, the *necessity* of humiliations, prayers, tears, reformations, attachment to ordinances, &c. growing devoutly austere, and piously censorious ; I repeat, when I meet with such a character (which I often do) the words of the apostle still recur, “ The dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” I am persuaded, that this character originates from the distress of unbelief, and is the genuine offspring of a wounded conscience.

CHRIST and Belial cannot dwell together, nor can guilt and the gospel inhabit the same soul : where the gospel is entertained, guilt can find no place. But where the gospel is hid, or, losing its spiritual demonstration and power, dwindleth into word *only*—there guilt obtains : men think with that Syrian, who scoffingly asked, If the rivers of Damascus were not preferable to the waters of Jordan ?

IN looking around me, I have observed among mankind, that it is thought sufficient to patronize virtue and purity, without entering into the spirit and practice thereof. A pious reflection, a compunctive sigh, with a prayer in the evening, atones for the evil of the day, and hushes the worm to sleep, under the notion of its being a child of grace. There are a few particulars in *their* catalogue of vices, which, if in the most favorable selfish partial construction, they chance to escape, they fail not to number themselves among the saints, and to look down upon their brethren.

THE free gospel which preaches salvation to helpless man, without works of righteousness done by him, is commonly accused of libertinism. But let me tell you, the law and human righteousness, have their libertines also : witness the religious disputes of the day, as well as of ages past.

THE greatest patrons of human holiness, yea, even the bold angelic assertors of personal perfection, are wise in their generation, as the children of this world : There is no cunning sleight, or craftiness, that they will not avail themselves of, to give their adversary the fall ; though they can consistently promise nothing to the public by it, nor to themselves, except a little pelf, and the whistling of a name : for whom they pretend to overthrow, they confess to be their fellow saints and servants of Jesuſ. They also hold up to the public, in the character of the reprobate, persons whom they never conversed with, nor even knew by face ; and in defence of their conduct, appeal to the world for the truth of their

insinuations : chearfully admitting the accuser of the brethren himself, an evidence against them.

THIS is a picture in miniature, of a self-righteous, self-holy libertine, a vile transgressor, both of the law of Moses and of Christ.

To do evil that good may come, is a maxim exploded with abhorrence by the apostle, as incompatible with christianity, and an abomination before God and our Saviour ; yet this abomination is practised, even in the high places of the self-righteous, and lies mingled with their offerings upon the altar.

THAT men bite and devour one another, is certainly an evil : that they whisper, mutter, backbite, and slander, is evil : that they misrepresent, and uncover each others nakedness before the face of the sun, is undoubtedly an evil : but these and a thousand more of like nature, are easily accounted for, easily answered, and the

the stain wiped out, with this single plea, “ Our aim is to do good.”

WHOM self-righteous men mean to traduce, they make public prayer for : and when from rigid virtue, awful justice, or an affected simplicity of piety, they find it indispensable to tell God Almighty the crimes or infirmities of the culprit, they are extremely circumstantial, except it suit their purpose better, and the policy of the cause requires, that they should pretend to a rod in reserve ; which, but for their lenity, would chastise the offender as with scorpions : here a something insinuated to be highly culpable, must be nameless.

SOMETIMES the accusation relates to matters of faith, and sometimes to manners : but error in matters of faith, the public are inclined to wink at. Therefore heresy without the sauce of corrupt manners, is but an insipid dish in these days : add but the sauce with a high seasoning, the priest and the peasant will feed with delight :

light: "They eat up the sins of my people," says the prophet.

YEA, say you, but this relates to priests of the Roman persuasion, who derive advantages of riches and power, from the sins of the people. But I averr, it is true also of who call themselves Protestants, and particularly applicable to the greatest pretenders to holiness among them.

AMONGST these, the foibles and infirmities of one man *feeds*, yea, *fattens* another: either as they reap consolation from comparison, or by these steps ascend to superiority. I have heard it reported of the holy author of the Saints everlasting Rest, that he had an inclination even to longing, to serve up Dr. Crisp to himself, and the public, as a heretical dish of the first relish: but to his great mortification, he found, after the most critical enquiry, that he could not with all his art, procure a proper sauce; without which the dish would be unpalatable to much the greater part
of

of mankind : Hence, the pious complaint, That, but for Dr. Crisp's purity of manners, they could easily have refuted his doctrine, and have held it up in such a light to the public, as would divest it even of the appearance of truth, and its author of credit.

O ! self-righteousness, what a Proteus art thou ! Nothing can be more frequent in the mouths of those gentry, than that, " That man's faith can never be wrong, whose life is right." Yet they mean this only to Arminians, Arians, Socinians, Deists, Jews and Heathen. Among those, whose life is supposed to be upright, they entitle to the love and favor of God ; however disconsonant their faith may be to the sacred scriptures, yea, though they stand charged in the latter, with having no faith at all : " For all men have not faith."

BUT (say you) do they not mean to apply it, as well to such who are on the other side of the question ? nay, far, very far, are they from applying

plying it to a true disciple of Jesus: however unquestionable the uprightness of *his* life may be, yet its evidence for the truth of *his* faith, shall not be admitted: nor its recommendation in the least attended to; as I have observed in the case of Dr. Crisp: and I may here add, in the case of the apostle Paul himself: Paul, did I say! let me still add, in the case of one greater than Paul, who says, "Which of you convinceth me of sin, and if I speak the truth, why do you not believe me?"

You will naturally ask, whence this bias, this absurd partiality, so palpable and glaring? It originates from nature, by which man is a child of wrath, without hope, and without God in the world: the child of wrath, does not imply an object of the divine anger, or fury, respecting the persons of men, as sundry dream; but relates to that enmity, and wrath against God, and against his holy child Jesus, wherewith satan impregnated the human heart, when he sowed the evil seed; of which the Saviour spake, where he says,

says, “ Ye are of your Father the devil, and the lusts of your Father ye will do.” These lusts consist in enmity to Jesus Christ, in particular to his free, full, and extended salvation of mankind, without works of righteousness as done by them. Naturally, we know nothing of this grace, we have no idea of it, and when we begin to hear and enquire, the father of ignorance and unbelief accuses it of deception, irrationality, and imposture ; that it is destructive to virtue, goodness, and holiness.

NOR need they, who are by nature and bias children of wrath, and [the seed of the serpent, much persuasion on this head : the prince of this world, when he cometh, still finds somewhat in them. Such is the bias under which every human heart is born into this world, and therefore we are all children of wrath, by nature : Ignorance, doubtfulness, unbelief, and enmity to Christ and to his great salvation, constitute the intellectual feeling, and acting character of every child of Adam, while in the state of na-

ture ; without hope, and without God in the world. Nor (when every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ) are we perfectly exempt from the assaults of self-righteousness ; for, though self-righteousness may be no longer predominant, or the principle that sways the soul ; yet it inheres in the human heart, an evil seed, which, however diligently and carefully weeded, is not perfectly eradicated while we are in the body, “ This vile body must be changed.”

WHERE self-righteousness is allowed of, and every virtue and glory, and even salvation itself, are placed to that account ; it is by way of compensation for sin to expiate accumulated guilt, and to palliate infirmity. “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Holiness is absolutely necessary to our consolation, and to our confidence towards God. For, if our hearts condemn us, we have no confidence towards him. This necessary holiness, men gather with divers means, and from different quarters. The christian

stian *indeed* gathers with Christ, who of God is made unto us sanctification : Conscious of Christ being his holiness, he is satisfied with him ; and as he is in Christ, and Christ in him, he stands holy to God : without the consideration of his own righteousness, which is according to the law, either in an active or passive sense.

HOLY and without blame before God in love : unto this we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4. True holiness consists in a conformity to the nature and will of God ; without which we cannot see him : nor will his presence (to us) contain the fulness of joy. Christ is made of God unto us sanctification : Christ, including the people in himself, in all his doings and sufferings, sanctified himself, that he might sanctify them : which he effected by the offering up of his body once for all. Through the whole scene of his humiliation, Christ was considered as the sole sinner, whose purgation, by adequate chastisements, was the purgation of the whole : He, through his blood,

being a plenary propitiation for all: hence we read, when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down. Holiness, in the first sense, as applicable to mankind, intends that state wherein Jesus Christ hath placed us before the face of God: This is our holiness in the divine account; here the holy eye beholds us with pleasure, and we are entitled *unto*, and blessed *with* his complacency and delight. This is our legal meetness to be partakers (with the saints) of the glorious inheritance.

BUT *this*, is true to them who believe not; as righteousness was to Abraham, when in uncircumcision: yet, when we come to the faith and obedience of the truth, *then*, what is true in Christ, is true also in *us*. It is impossible for me to mean a physical change; as though nature ceased to be itself, and the passions no longer subsisted. But my meaning is, that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, as made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: that what is wrought and per-

fected in *him*, as our surety and representative, is revealed and manifested in *us*: until the conscience answers to the gospel report; or to what is thus wrought in him, as face answers to face in a glass.

THE prophet, as I take it, hath decided the question, respecting distinction between righteousness and holiness, as perfected in Christ for mankind, without their aid, faith, or experience: and the revelation of that grace in them: where he says, “The work of righteousness is peace, and the effects thereof, quietness and assurance for ever.” From the knowledge of the *former*, proceeds the *latter*; therefore, who would grow in grace, must grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE scriptures speak of saints, as being such in Christ Jesus *only*, and not in *themselves*, in their own virtues and righteousnesses. The gospel shews us, what we are in Christ, and what he is made of God unto us. In proportion to faith, and assurance, we appropriate *him* and his

unsearchable riches ; as pertaining to us ; adding to faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For, if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

I AM aware of what men have learned to say on this subject : they mean to patch the old garment with pieces of new cloth ; by which means the rent is still made worse : they mean, that these virtues and graces are to be *personally* acquired, in habit and practice, until their calling and election be made sure by means thereof.

BUT I conceive, that all these virtues and graces are in Christ, and are numbered among his unsearchable riches. When men have attained

tained to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ ; to know that they are one with him, and he with them, and follow on to know their Lord ; *then* all the treasures of wisdom, and of knowledge, which are hid in him, open up to their view : and they are authorized to appropriate, what they apprehend in his riches and righteousness : hence, from his immense treasures, they have faith, then add to their faith, virtue ; then knowledge, then temperance, then patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. “ Thus, receiving from his fulness, and grace for grace : until they all with open face, beholding, as in a glafs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Here, they are conscious of their being as Christ is ; yea, even while they are in this present world, compassed about with infirmities, and ever confessing, that in them, according to the flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

THE apostle, speaking of the holiness of the true worshippers, says, that being once purged,
they

they have no more conscience of sins ; and that they are made perfect, pertaining to the conscience.

BUT methinks I hear you complain, that I am not yet in your path : You ask me, whether the believer on Jesus has not some mark, some character, to distinguish him from such who believe not ? I reply, he has : First, he has an ear-mark. Nor is it an uncommon thing for a shepherd to distinguish his sheep by an ear-mark. Under the dispensation of Moses, the servant who (from his attachment to his master, or love to his wife and children, who were not to partake of his freedom) renounced his privilege of freedom from servitude, had his ear bored with an awl : it was done in the presence of the judges, to signify, that it was his own choice, and that he was under none other compulsion than love, to abide in the family. It was done at his master's door, implying, a determined resolution, and vow, to abide in the house all the days of his life, to hear his master's voice,

voice and to do his will. Again, our Saviour, by the Psalmist, says, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened :” which opening of the ears, the apostle to the Hebrews construes, doing the will of God. The great Shepherd also says, “His sheep follow him, for they know his voice : and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers.”

I AM aware of the pretensions of all who call themselves, or choose to be called gospel preachers, to the above character : All who are but *nominally* christian join in the shout, “We are his sheep, we know, we hear his voice, we follow him ;” but the voice of a stranger we neither hear nor follow. Yet, as the claimants are extremely various : perfectly opposite in sect, discipline, doctrine, and faith : they cannot all be worshippers and followers of the true Christ : many of them must be hearers, and followers of the stranger, whom they profess to disclaim.

WHEN Moses and Elias in their vesture of glory, attended the Saviour in the mountain of his transfiguration ; and there spake with him, of his decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem ; his disciples, whom he favoured with this blessed interview, heard the voice from heaven, saying, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him.” Hear him in preference to Moses and Elias, whom ye were wont to hear : theirs was the ministry of the Old Testament, containing the dead and killing letter : but *his* is the ministry of the New Testament, which has the Spirit that giveth life.

HEAR the well-beloved Son, for in his decease accomplished at Jerusalem, the missions of Moses and the prophets have their final end ; every prediction, promise, requisite, and threatening, contained in the law and prophets, are, in his death and resurrection, executed, fulfilled, and accomplished. Beyond *his* death, there is no curse ; for he was made a curse for us : in consequence

sequence of which, we are delivered from going down into the pit. Beyond his resurrection, we are not to look for the accomplishment of promises : “ For all the promises in him, are yea, and in him, Amen.” Therefore, hear the speakings of his blood.

HEAR ye him in all particulars of his humiliation : in his birth ; in his circumcision ; in his toilsome life, his baptism, fasting, prayers, and temptation : in his agony and bloody sweat, in his tremendous, yet precious death and burial : in his triumphant resurrection and ascension ; and in the coming of his witnessing Spirit. In all these Jesus speaks light, life, and immortality to man : in all these he asserts, and indisputably *proves* the love of God to his creatures ; free, rich, invaluable, unchangeable, everlasting : that their debts are paid, their crimes cancelled ; and that the hand-writing which was against them, and which was contrary to them, he has taken out of their way, and nailed it to his cross.

THIS is that ear-mark, which distinguishes the sheep of our Saviour's pasture : This is that testimony, which all his *true* worshippers attend to : nor is it from whim, passion, fluctuating frame, or transient influence of the Spirit of truth himself, that they hear him ; but from principle, from choice, they *know* his voice and follow him.

THEY follow him as their great Fore-runner, who went before to explore the dangerous pass : where they perceive *his* track, they follow without fear : no open opposition, hidden ambush, nor secret snare have they there to fear. They are perfectly assured, that he has not only, as their Fore-runner, minutely and critically examined every difficulty ; but that, as the Captain of their salvation, he has removed them all out of their way, and has rendered their path to glory, so direct, so secure, that the *wayfaring man*, though a fool, shall not err therein.

THEY

THEY follow him as their Shepherd, on whose watchful care they are dependant: no obstacle appals *him*, nor will he forsake them in the face of danger: but, from the experience which he learned by the things which he suffered, from his knowledge, by which he justifies many; from his love, tenderness, and power; he continues to be their Saviour, through all the distresses of life: as he has already been, from every pain and penalty incurred through their offences; by laying down his life for them.

THEY follow him, not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life: by him they go in and out, and find pasture, and have that to eat which the world knows nothing of.

BUT, probably, you will ask me, Do they not distinguish themselves by following his footsteps? Undoubtedly—they follow and appropriate every footprint which he hath trodden; hence, what he *is*, what he hath *done*, *suffered*, and obtained
by

by means thereof, is *theirs*: and as they are righteous in his righteousness, so are they holy in his holiness: in his Sonship they have their adoption, and in his acceptance they have everlasting salvation.

Possibly your meaning is, that the disciples of Jesus are capable of *imitating* him in spirit and manner. This I cannot subscribe to, except ye call fire painted on the wall, an imitation of fire burning in the furnace; or a pleasant picture devoid of spirit, reason, and life, an imitation of *man*, angel, &c. Yea, even *these* approach their original, nearer, *much* nearer, than men or angels, in their most spiritual imitations, can approach to the perfections of Jesus, “Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints, yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?” The sacred book says, “He charged his angels with folly:” and again, “To which of the angels has he said at any time, Thou art my Son?” and again, speak-

speaking to the Son, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows : Again, when he brought his first begotten into the world, he commanded all the angels to worship him.” What then is man, who says to the worm, Thou art my sister, and to corruption, Thou art my mother ; that he should pretend to answer to the pattern, and in personal virtues to tread in the steps of Jesus ! Let every such consider the parable of the pharisee and the publican, who went up to the temple to pray ; the application is easy.

WHAT can we, what *must* we think, of such, who pretending to the Spirit and practice of Jesus, are manifestly the reverse ? Are we to admit of profession, in contradiction to fact ? By no means, my Brethren : let no man deceive you : when you see the proud, the dissembler, the envious, the covetous, the malicious, turn a deaf ear to his profession of following the example

ample of Jesus : in not believing such you will honor your Saviour.

THEY will not follow the stranger ; they know not his voice. “ Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant ; for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after : yet the servant abideth not in the house for ever ; but the son abideth for ever, and was counted worthy of more glory than Moses ; inasmuch as he who builded the house, hath more glory than the house.” Christ, and his gospel, supersedes Moses and his law ; therefore, the voice and lead of the latter are those of the stranger, which the true worshipper of Jesus will neither know nor follow.

THE stranger may also intend the suggestions of corrupt nature ; which every true disciple of the Lamb is to turn a deaf ear to. We are simply to attend to the revelation of God, which teaches us to “ reckon ourselves dead indeed

unto

unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ our Lord." Again: It may intend the devices of satan, which the christian cannot be supposed to be ignorant of; and therefore they will not hear the stranger's voice, nor follow his lead: It may also be understood of such, who teach for doctrines the commandments of men. These the christian ear cannot relish; they are unfriendly to man: they are not the voice of the father, the brother, the lover; but of the unfeeling stranger, whom we will neither hear nor follow.

THE true worshipper of Jesus stands distinguished in his attachment to his Lord. "To you who believe (says an apostle) he is precious." I will make a man, saith the Lord, more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. The gold of Ophir intends the gold of ashes, or gold without dross; probably from a country so situated to the sun, that the chymistry of its beams, in conjunction with the dew of heaven, gilds the

mountains with such pure extractions from their bowels, as to need no artificial refinement, and therefore called the golden wedge of Ophir.

OR, in another sense, it may intend the spirit and fruit of the sacrifice. In the sacred book, gold is a familiar emblem of spiritual things, of durable riches and righteousness, extracted from the Crucified upon the altar of his cross, and with just propriety, in my idea, called the golden wedge of Ophir, or of ashes.

As to the literal explication of the prophet, respecting the overthrow and depopulation of Babylon; when a male inhabitant should be so very rare, as to be estimated more precious than fine gold, yea, than the golden wedge of Ophir. This, I say, I wave (being to us perfectly uninteresting) for what more immediately concerns us.

BUT however valuable and precious (as the golden wedge of Ophir) the spirit and fruit of

the sacrifice may be, yet the man Christ Jesus is *more* precious still: to all the benefits we receive from his blood and death, the person of our glorious Lord is infinitely preferable. Christ, in his person, is precious to the true worshipper, above all the riches of his salvation. The nearer we approach the throne of God and of the Lamb, the more fully we come into the spiritual life, the more sweetly we relish, and sincerely join in, the new song, “Worthy is the Lamb,” &c. Forgetting ourselves, and all our own happiness, we are caught up into the admiration of his person, as fairer than the sons of men: the beauty of holiness, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

WHEN the scriptures speak of the blessed man, Christ is intended: and when they speak of the miserable man, they still mean Christ. I am aware of the offence that this assertion will give to many; for here, when man would introduce himself under some particular character,

Christ is always in his way. Are you ambitious of the character of the blessed man, who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful? No sooner do you press towards the chair, but the gospel shews you it is already filled with Jesus. Disappointed in your aim at the highest character, under which you could claim the love and favor of God as your just due; you resolve for that of the miserable, as what will entitle you to the compassion and mercy of your God: pressing on to that seat, not suspecting a competition there; the Spirit of truth, with pointed finger, shews you it already filled with Him, whose countenance was marred more than any man's, and his visage more than the sons of men.

WHAT! say you, is Jesus every-where? is Jesus every thing? is he the highest? is he the lowest? is he the blessed? is he the cursed? Indeed, my brethren, he is: He fills all things; he is the first, he is the last, the beginning and the

the end : O ! he is all and in all : and you, and I, are nothing but by him. This, my brethren, is the glorious Man, more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir.

AGAIN, the true worshipper abides in [the simplicity that is in Christ. Simplicity hath divers acceptations in common language; and even in the scriptures : sometimes it intends silliness, foolishness, indiscretion, &c. at other times, it implies singleness of heart, plainness of speech, plain dealing, and artless honesty. In the latter sense, the apostle intends it : where he says, “ in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world ; and more abundantly to you-wards :” And again, “ Lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

CHRISTIANITY, at present, respecting faith and practice, seems to be stripped of its simplicity ; and to have none other adornings, than
the

the trappings of human wisdom, and the inventions of men. Faith is now a science, unto which, none but men of extraordinary genius can attain. The poor fishermen of Galilee would stand no chance, in the present day, to come to the unity of the faith ; intricate, spruce, and finical as it is : for, as it is scientifically taught, the technical terms must be first gained, and applied with propriety, or whatever a man's conceptions may be, he will not be considered an adept in the faith.

THERE are also faiths many, such as the faith of adherence, reliance, dependence, assurance, and many others whose names I have forgot. There are also many *acts* of faith, as the reflex act, the direct act, &c. It is also supposed that there are habits of faith, when faith itself is wholly dormant, or out of exercise. To the latter, some impute what they call the final perseverance of the saints : and by this means account for Peter's continuing in the faith, even while he denied it. But you and I, brethren,

are

are unacquainted with these prodigious finesseſ, we are ſimple enough to think that there is but one faith; and that no man has faith, longer than he has it: and that *that* faith which is not alive, is dead: and that our perseverance and preservation to eternal life, is *in him* and wholly depends *upon him* who says, “ Because I live, you shall live also.”

As to what in the preſent day is called Practical Christianity; with the ſame tongue bleſſ they God, even the Father: and therewith curſe men, who are made after the ſimilitude of God. Holy mortified saints of a long ſtanding, who have been long dead to the world, whose converſation is in heaven, and who have indeed one foot in the grave; the eclat of whose harveſt-home, we have been taught to expect, and look for; when they ſhould be gathered into the garner, as a ſhock of corn fully ripe: during theſe our expeſtations, they have, in their laſt moments as it were, been dabbling in politics; ſtudying hireling authors, and racking their inven‐tions,

ventions, to prove the *utility*, and even the *equity* of oppression: and, under a pretended voice of peace and friendly advice, stimulating to war and human blood-shedding. O rare modern apostles! O rare practical christianity!

DOES not the above feed infidelity, and give men cause to say, that the christian profession is merely a farce? Their pretended master (says the objector), according to them, was holy, harmless, undefiled: and his disciples, particularly his ministers, profess to walk in his footsteps: but we perceive them to be men of this world, fond of riches, honors, fame and power; not in any degree suitable to their profession. I am obliged to confess, that, from an impartial view of the holy men of the day, they have just grounds for their objection.

THE spiritual worshipper meddles not with politics, he delights not in war, his Master's kingdom is not of this world: whatever nation his country may be at war with, it is impossible for

for him to fast and pray for the destruction of either: but that they should live in peace, concord, and, as brethren, together in unity, is the appetite of his soul: for *that* he hungers, thirsts, and prays, according to the Spirit of his Saviour. This, my brethren, is christian simplicity.

As to modern faith, who can comprehend it? More justifications, and methods of effecting them, have been found out in our days, than men or angels knew before: or than they who stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, will ever know. Yea, according to the present system, such architecture, such a building, is required of who would be thought a christian, as Milton describes in his bridge: not such a one as Trajan built across the Danube, or a bridge across the Atlantic, from Great Britain to the American strand; through which, though wide and deep, a bottom may be found: but a bridge over the

bottomless abyss, in emulation of the Creator of all things, when on the empty air the earth be balanced well.

WHAT is not true, until it is believed, affords no foundation to build upon : it is drawing the line, or plummet, over chaos ; and laying the foundation upon space. And yet, that God loved us, and laid the iniquities of us all upon Jesus, that Jesus died for our sins, and put them away by the sacrifice of himself ; though preached in the gospel, is not (according to modern systems) true until it is believed. Thus man's faith is made to give virtue and dignity to the blood of Jesus, and what renders it propitiatory for sin. Yea, Christ himself is formed by faith, if we are to believe, that “ an unapplied Christ is no Christ at all.”

You and I, my brethren, cannot but perceive, that these distinctions are all calculated

to render man coadjutant to the Almighty : that, as allies in the fight, they may divide the spoil, and share the glory. But this, to us, is not only inadmissible, but abhorrent : it stands in direct opposition to the simplicity that is in Christ, wherein the true worshipper abides with joy and thankfulness.

THE simplicity of salvation, which is *in* Christ (as already hinted) intends a free and *full* salvation wrought *in him* according to the will, wisdom, and power of God : and, all without any virtues, pains, or penalties, by us personally atchieved, or endured : In the simple, or implicit belief of this, as the revelation, or word of God ; consists the simplicity of the faith ; in the power and spirit of which the disciple of Jesus abides : not judging himself by himself, nor comparing himself with himself. This faith is one ; it cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. It gathers not from *man's* doings,

suf-

sufferings, frames, nor feelings ; but fortifies itself wholly in the faithfulness of God, and rests itself upon his word. And this it does at *all* times, and in *every* condition of the heart. “ Faith is the evidence of things un-seen, and the substance of things hoped for.” “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall the fruit-tree be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

THE faith of Christ hath also a simplicity of manners ; the spirit and power of that gospel, which the true worshipper believes, instructs and influences him to consider all mankind as his brethren : hence he cannot *wish* evil to his neighbour, much less can he designedly *injure* him.

To follow peace with all men, is his sentiment, aim, and desire: knowing that Christ his Saviour gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Brethren, farewell.

Your Brother and Servant,

(for Christ's sake)

J. R.

F I N I S.







